

**THE CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SIMILARITY OF THE  
BAFOKENG, BAKUENA AND THE BATAUNG LINEAGES AMONGST THE SOTHO**

**by**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that **THE CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SIMILARITY OF THE BAFOKENG, BAKUENA AND THE BATAUNG LINEAGES AMONGST THE SOTHO** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to My parents Sehlabo Lazarus and Blandina 'Makose Monyakane. My aunt Mabolaeng Mary Anne Monyakane, uncles Vitalis Montši & Seutloali Monyakane and Thomas Mosomothane. My brothers and sisters 'Maseabata, Molisana, Kose, Montši, 'Mampolokeng, Thabiso, 'Maseutloali, Rethabile, Seabata, Bafokeng, Seutloali, Monyakane, Motlalentoa, 'Mathai and Letlotlo. Last but not least, I also dedicate it to my son Tšepo, my nephews and nieces.

## ABSTRACT

The central argument that underpins this thesis is that the Bataung, Bafokeng and the Bakuena lineages are found across all the Basotho groups of Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi. The thesis concerns itself with the similarity of the Sotho groups, a topic that has seldom received a sustained scholarly attention. Scholars have devoted much attention in discussing Sotho groups of Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi, but their concern has mostly been to describe one group at the time discussing their cultural, social and political dimensions.

The thesis aim investigates the oneness of Sotho by discussing the cultural, social and political similarities of the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi. The thesis drew on a range of semi-structured interviews with academics, senior people with knowledge of Sotho culture and literature to crystallise the information from the narrative analysis of documents, media and secondary literature.

The thesis maintains that Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi are similar people. Their cultural dimension shows they have similar languages that share the same collection of words (langue) that indicates the same same origin. They also share the name 'Basotho' ~ *Abeshundu* that emanates from their similar way of dressing. The Sotho groups' social dimension shows that they have similar practices of birth, raising children, *lebollo* (initiation school) and handling of death. They share similar games, folktales and taboos that reflect the aforementioned four cycles of human experiences in similar narratives across the groups. The thesis finds that Sotho groups have similar way of governance. They come together in the hierarchy of similar clans (e.g. Bafokeng, Bataung and Bakuena), chiefdoms and a group. These subdivisions in a group help with the allocation of resources for each individual and maintaining status quo in governance. The Sotho groups have similar proverbs and idioms to counsel proper leadership. The thesis discusses Sotho groups together as they come from the same origin although they have gone their separate ways.

The thesis uses Gellner and Smith theories of ethnicity to explain the similarity of the Sotho groups. Gellner's view is that one chooses to belong to a particular culture and associates oneself

with people who practice this culture. Ethnicity is socially constructed due to experiences and people's circumstances. Smith complements the description of the Sotho in forming different groups by saying that in these groups, there are memories of shared historical past. There is a continuum of the original culture where the groups have resemblance in their ways of life and symbolical elements, although adapted to their new environments and time. The variations of the groups's practices are not their differences but they are changes caused by a quest to adapt to the new environment.

**Key words:** Bapedi (Northern Sotho), Basotho (Southern Sotho), Basotho “*Abeshundu*”, Batswana, Chieftaincy, Ethnicity , Initiation rite (*lebollo*), Life stages (Social practices), Sotho language, Sotho lineages (Bafokeng, Bakuena, Bataung), Sotho people

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Preface to the Introduction

The aim of this study is to understand the cultural, social and political similarities of the Bafokeng, Bakuena and Bataung lineages amongst the Sotho groups to establish whether the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi are one people. This chapter explores if there are similarities between the various Sotho groups and provides the aim, a rationale, theoretical framework, literature review, research resources and structure of the argument.

### 1.2 Contesting Sotho groups similarity

The Sotho people found mainly in the lower half of southern Africa i.e. Botswana, South Africa and Lesotho, seem to agree that they do not have the same historical, linguistic and cultural roots. They, and indeed other societies, consider themselves as three distinct groups of people (c.f. Breutz 1991, Monnig 1967 and Ellenberger 1997). They refer to themselves as the Batswana, Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) respectively and are generally designated this way, yet the generic term "Sotho"<sup>1</sup> attests that they have very strong ties, such as the same origin and identical cultural, social and political markers. Although the Sotho acknowledge that they have a similar generic term (Breutz, 1991:7)<sup>2</sup>, the thesis finds it paradoxical that they regard themselves as three different groups of people, as similar lineages, such as Bafokeng, Bataung and Bakuena, are present across these Sotho groups.

To illustrate this point, the Bafokeng lineage in Batswana society do not generally consider themselves as having ties to the Bafokeng lineages which exist within the Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho). Neither does the Bafokeng lineage that exists in the Bapedi seem to consider

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Sotho" is used to refer to three groups of people (Batswana/ Western Sotho, Bapedi/Northern Sotho and Basotho/ Southern Sotho). The name Basotho is the conventional and historical term that refers to these groups when considered in a collective sense, but contemporarily, it has been adopted mainly to refer singularly to the Southern Sotho population that resides in South Africa, mostly in the southern parts of the Gauteng Province, the Free State and in modern day Lesotho.

<sup>2</sup> Breutz is a classical writing, as it is one of the original writings which began the discipline in relation to the explanation of Sotho people. Breutz is one of the first people to write about the identical nature of the Sotho people. Other classical writings on the subject include Thomas Arbousset (1884) in *Journal des Missions* and Ashton's *The Basuto: A Social Study of Traditional and Modern Lesotho*.

themselves as having direct ties to their Bafokeng brethren in Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho).<sup>3</sup> The Bafokeng amongst the Southern Sotho likewise do not demonstrate any affinity to the Bafokeng within the Batswana or Bapedi groups. This is the situation of the majority of lineages amongst the Sotho. Subsequently, due to the ensuing historical, political and geographical dynamics that divided the Sotho group, it is not usually recognised that these three groups have similar characteristics indicating that at one stage they were one people.

Nevertheless, the aim of this thesis is to investigate whether the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi do in fact have the same origin and characteristics by focusing and analysing the Bafokeng, Bataung and Bakuena lineages within the three groups. The research was limited to these three lineages given that it was impractical to consider all the lineages that exist.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the lineages of the Bataung, Bafokeng and Bakuena are the major ones within these groups and hence are able to represent the other smaller lineages.

### **1.3 Aim**

Flowing from the above exposition on the contestation of the Sotho identity and the assertion that contrary to the view that they are three distinct groups, they do in fact have similar characteristics, the aim of this thesis is to answer the following central-and sub-question:

Are the Sotho one people?

*and the following sub-questions:*

- What factors influence the perception that Sotho groups are one?
- At what point did they see themselves unrelated?
- What influenced their acquisition of different identity groups?
- How do the Sotho groups conceptualise the idea that they come from the same origin?
- Do the Basotho share the same beliefs, values and customs?

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<sup>3</sup>For example, consider Ellenberger (1997) amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Monnig (1967) amongst the Bapedi and Breutz (1991) amongst the Batswana.

<sup>4</sup>These lineages are, among others, the Bakubung, Batlhaping, Batawana and Batshweneng.

## 1.4 Rationale

There is a wide range of literature on the Sotho groups (Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho)) that attest to the existence of the Bakuena, Bataung and Bafokeng lineages within these groups; however, it is heavily slanted to discussing the cultural, social and political aspects, which affect the Sotho as Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi respectively. Examples are the discussion of the nationality of the Sotho people in Federic Ellenberger's *History of the Basuto: Ancient and Modern* (1912 with the latest republication in 1997), Breutz's *The Social and Political Systems of Sotho-Tswana: Four Generations of Traditional Culture Change* (1967 republished in 1991) and Monnig's *The Bapedi* (1967).

The abovementioned studies<sup>5</sup> focus on a particular political boundary or area and nationality where the Bafokeng, Bakuena, Bataung and other Sotho lineages reside, which only gives a cursory treatment of them being part of the same lineage across the entire Sotho nationalities. Recent publications, such as Moilwe (2010), Ramakhula (2010) and Rampai (2010), awaken a sense of culture and identity amongst the Sotho groups but do not thoroughly treat the question of the oneness of the Sotho lineages across the three groups. The studies mostly relate to Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi in isolation. The literature on the culture and identity of the Sotho groups does not refer to the strong linkages that are evidenced by the lineages.

Several Bataung intellectuals from different parts of Southern Africa co-authored *Nalane le Mmole wa Bataung (The History and Oral Stories of the Bataung)* (Hlalele, Mohatlane, Moletsane, Phohlela & Ramabodu, 2000). This publication indicates that the Bataung originate from a man called Mofurutse/ Mohurutse, and the subsequent clans that were established culminated in the formation of the Batswana and the Bapedi. Yet the discussion of the Bataung as a lineage focuses more on their Basotho (Southern Sotho) nationality relating more to the Hlalele and Moletsane offspring who joined the kingdom of Moshoeshoe during the *Difaqane* wars.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Here the study refers to examples such as Ellenberger (1997), Breutz (1991) and Monnig (1967).

<sup>6</sup> Shaka attacked the neighbouring communities including the Sotho in order to consolidate his power as a great king through a series of wars. Populations were dispersed and regrouped again as various communities. The Sotho called this prolonged competition of power through wars in southern Africa *Difaqane* ~ *Lifaqane*.

The above five co-authors discuss only the one lineage and present it as the Bataung regardless of the geographical boundaries that exist in both Lesotho and South Africa. They trace the origin of the Bataung as a people and use their family tree as proof that they are related. They further show their relationship with other Sotho lineages who were found to be related to the Bataung. However, the research does not provide a thorough treatment of the specific lineage of the Southern Sotho Bataung, Bapedi and Batswana, nor does it show that the Sotho groups are one people. Their research on the relatedness of the Southern Sotho Bataung with their Bapedi and Batswana groups focuses on their own lineage. This thesis wants to build on the aforementioned study by investigating the values, beliefs and customs of the Bataung, Bakwena and Bafokeng groups and to establish whether the lineage relationship runs across all the Sotho groups that are currently regarded as nationalities.

## **1.5 Theoretical framework**

The thesis is based on the theory of ethnicity as it best leads the way to answering whether the Sotho are one people. According to Darvill (2008:148), ethnicity claims to belong to a certain cultural group with regard to cultural presentations i.e. languages, genetics, and values. Scott (2014: 221–222) complements Darvill (2008) by mentioning that the individuals as well as others see themselves as a community who shares the same characteristics in terms of politics, language and various social activities that set them apart from other communities. Nagel (1994:152) divides the fundamental components of the theory of ethnicity into identity (belonging) and culture, i.e. one has acquired or practices a particular culture because one belongs to a particular identity.

The thesis adopts the theory of Gellner and Smith who have written widely about ethnicity (Isiksal, 2000)<sup>7</sup>. The thesis finds the views of Gellner (1983) and Smith (1986) relevant to African literature research. Although some analysis of the Sotho cultural, social and political dimensions have been made on the basis of this theory since missionary writers such as Breutz (1991) and Ellenberger (1997), little was done to develop it into a fully-fledged theory for

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<sup>7</sup> Isiksal\*, H. 2002 "Two Perspectives on the Relations of Ethnicity to Nationalism: Comparing Gellner and Smith." *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, vol 1: No.1. Also compare to Smith's *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986). Another example is Barth's (1969) *Ethnic Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*.

African languages, especially Sesotho. In one model of the theory of ethnicity proposed by Gellner (1983), one chooses to belong to a particular culture and associates oneself with people who practice that culture i.e. ethnicity is socially constructed due to experiences and people's circumstances.

Breautz (1991:23–24) and Couzens (2005:277) show that the missionaries, who were Western in origin, chose to live amongst the Sotho people. The University of Glasgow classified Marcell Jacottet, the daughter of a missionary from the Evangelic Missionary des Paris, Eduardo Jacottet, as a Mosotho upon her arrival at the University, even though Marcell was French and studied at the University of Glasgow in London. One's original identity and culture recedes in this model of ethnicity, while the new identity of choice takes precedence. Marcell was seen as having a Sotho identity because she lived amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho).

Another ethnicity model indicating the same cultural origins and roots defines a lineage as a way in which people are related, i.e. are of the same blood (Matšela & Moletsane, 2006:3)<sup>8</sup> It is not a matter of choice, but is seen as natural to belong to a certain ethnic group. Howuker and Hollington (2007: 331) add that these people of the same blood and cultural origins have a sense of attachment amongst themselves. The author prefers this model of ethnicity.

As Smith (1986) and (1991) holds similar views to Matšela and Moletsane on identity and culture, the thesis used Smith's ethnocentric perspective that ethnic groups are:

a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. (Schermerhorn, 1970, quoted by Isiksal, 2002:2).

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<sup>8</sup> Matšela and Moletsane are celebrated scholars with regard to African Languages and Sesotho. Their abovementioned publication is *'Mantlatilane*, 2006. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot.

According to Smith's perspective, the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi are similar. Although they went their separate ways, they come from Ntswanatsatsi as descendants of Mopedi-Moholo, who is their common ancestor. Mopedi-Moholo is explained in the *lebollo* (initiation school) that has the same curriculum across the three groups. The *lebollo* among the Sotho teaches similar ways of taking care of the family, food preparation, war tactics and craft and is an essence of the Sotho peoplehood. It teaches them how to handle birth, manhood and womanhood, death and how to raise children.

Schermerhorn (1970) in Isiksal (2002:2) and Levine (1999:165-180) suggest that an individual within an ethnic group goes about his/ her daily routine with the memories and representations of these symbolic elements in his/her head and his/her daily life is influenced by them. Even when people go their separate ways, the cultural practices of a people may transcend time and place and remain with a people in their groups, as is the case in the Sotho above. The similar way of life is also shown by the diaspora of the Basotho, i.e. the Lozi. The symbolic elements identify as similar ethnic groups. According to Levine (1999:177):

Ethnicity moves around in everyone's head .... It becomes shaped by consciousness and interaction, conceived here as interface between the mind, society and culture.

Smith's ethnocentric point of view engaged Gellner's modernist view in this thesis. The community's practices like marriage, coming of age, the initiation ceremony, and speaking a certain language are passed from one generation to the next. A person, as a member of the community, acquires these practices and is at liberty to practice and relate to them.

## **1.6 Literature review**

There is very little literature about the significance of the history of the Sotho people as one, particularly regarding the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi (Northern Sotho) and Batswana (sometimes termed Western Sotho). According to Gill (1997a:54<sup>9</sup> in Ellenberger, 1997), previous

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<sup>9</sup> See, Stephen J. Gill, "D.F. Ellenberger: A Brief Sketch of His Life and Work" in Ellenberger's classic *History of the Basuto: Ancient and Modern*.

research has not completed the study of the Sotho in the wider context of Southern Africa. Gill (1997a), adds that one of the classical scholars and proponents of the study of African Languages on the description of the Basotho in Southern Africa is Ellenberger (1912 reprinted in 1992<sup>10</sup> and 1997) due to the resurgence of the ethnicity and nationality debates at the dawn of South Africa's independence (1994). These debates still continue today<sup>11</sup> and are likely to continue into the future. This thesis complements the debates about ethnicity and nationality amongst the Sotho. Ellenberger (1992 reprinted in 1997) focuses mainly on the establishment of Moshoeshe's modern Lesotho. This thesis will add to the research that incorporates all the groups of the Sotho in order to enquire about them as a people. The thesis analyses the literature that discusses the question of Sotho oneness in terms of the ethnic and national framework.

The existent literature addresses Sotho oral literature such as folktales, folksongs, praises and proverbs. The missionaries became the first proponents of such work when they arrived amongst the Sotho. They published the abovementioned collections in an attempt to understand Sotho values, narratives, beliefs and customs. They printed classical works such as Mangaena's *Lithoko tsa Marena a Basotho (Basotho Chieftaincy Praise Poems)* (1997), Jaccottet's *Litšomo* (a collection of folktales) (1911 later reprinted in 2015) and Segoete's *Raphepheng* (2015), which is a collection of Sotho riddles, foods, ways of raising a Sotho child, values and other cultural aspects.

The literary research studied a great part of oral literature to find out whether it conforms to characteristics of modern literary texts such as poetry, narrative or drama. As a result, the thesis analysed rhyme, rhythm, figures of speech in praises and songs using the structuralism theory

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<sup>10</sup> See, D. Fred Ellenberger V.D.M. 1997 *History of the Basuto: Ancient and Modern*. Morija Museum and Archives: Morija

<sup>11</sup> See -Jana Marais, "Bakubung faction at War over Platinum Mining Stake" in *Sunday Times* August 22, 2010.  
 -Kahliso Khama's "Macufe Road Show set for Maseru" in *Lesotho Times* September 30, 2010. Macufe here stands for Mangaung (Bloemfontein) Cultural Festival, which is the joint venture of Lesotho and South Africa, to celebrate Southern Sotho culture. It involves Morija and Motheo (Bloemfontein) municipality.  
 -Andile Ntingi's "Royal Pains of the Bakubung" in *City Press* 25 April 2010 – an article of the review of the *History of the Bakgatla ba ga Kgafela in Botswana and South Africa* (2010).  
 -SABC2 *Who do you think you are?* "Nthathi Moshesh's Documentary", 2009. The documentary traced Nthathi's lineage in Lesotho and South Africa as a descendant of Moshoeshe1.  
 - Ramakhula, T. 2010. "Bakuenana: Unpacking the Genealogy of the Tribe of the Royal Family" in *Visions*. NV:No.5.



whose purpose is to test the literariness of the text,<sup>12</sup> e.g. Damane and Sanders' (1974) classical analysis of the oral praise poems of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) as literary poetry. The purpose was to find out whether Basotho praise poems are a form of poetry. This classifying of cultural aspects as oral literature having similar characteristics with Western conventional literature is related to aspects of reading and writing in order to disseminate literacy. While this thesis acknowledges Sotho oral genre as a form of literature, it will also use oral literature as data that explains the identity of the Sotho.

A fictional relating of stories about the Sotho culture in the Sotho literary genres have been published since 1833. The *Leselinyana* newspaper began by the French Missionaries serialised some of the works of oral literature reduced to writing before the works could be published. These were folktales, proverbs, praise poems and others. Sekese's *Mekhoa le Maele a Basotho Basotho* (Ways and Proverbs of the Basotho) (2011 originally published in 1893) was serialised in *Leselinyana* before it could get published. The publication of Sotho culture continues until today, e.g. Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* (2006), initially published in 1930 as a historical and political narrative novel that portrays the traditional life of the Sotho groups. This kind of literature could be read by the fireside and in classrooms. The thesis sought to transcend the fictional aspect and show that the historical features that relate to culture explain the Sotho in these stories that define the identity of the contemporary Sotho people. The Sotho traditional riddles, praise poems and folktales collected in Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* (2006), Segoete's *Raphepheng* (2015 initially published in 1913) and Mangoaela's *Lithoko tsa Marena* (praise poems)(1997), express similar Sotho ways of social life, such as raising children, as they learn about Sotho ways through riddles. There is a political and social aspect to the *lebollo* (initiation school) reflected in praise poems that are usually created after a war, symbolising the protection of the country and its role in empowering men and women as responsible citizens. Furthermore, proverbs embody the beliefs and values of the Sotho.

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<sup>12</sup> See Abram, M.H. *Theory of Literary Terms* (1988)

## 1.7 Research sources

The thesis used a methodological approach, which is qualitative in nature (cf. Bernard and Ryan 2010), because it seeks to understand the Sotho identity in contemporary times. This study uses data from secondary sources that narrate the stories of Sotho ethnicity and nationality with regard to their cultural, social and political practices to investigate whether they are one. Books, official and non-official documents discussing the Sotho groups and their lineages were used as sources of data. The thesis consulted newspapers and other media that discuss issues related to the Sotho ethnicity and identity.

The thesis was also developed by drawing on primary sources. Sixteen semi-structured interviews<sup>13</sup> were undertaken to complement the document analysis. The aim was to conduct 20 interviews. The interviewees are academics and people with knowledge of the oral history of the Sotho lineages (oral historians are knowledgeable sources of the Sotho lineages and identity), their expert knowledge on ethnicity and Sotho history, and because they are engaged in debates about ethnicity and the Sotho language.

The interviewees were from Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana among the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana groups. The Basotho under the governance of the Bafokeng lineage in the diaspora (Lozi/Makololo)<sup>14</sup> in Zambia were also consulted. The interviewees' utility is that they will verify and clarify data sourced from both secondary and primary documents. The actual interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysing data. The authors spoke to the participants with regard to oral folklore. Since their knowledge is not protected by copyright, the author's duty was to quote them as primary sources and not to pretend that their knowledge was that of the researcher.

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<sup>13</sup> Materials- Two interviews were sadly lost when a computer and a smart phone were stolen, three interviewees declined to participate in this research project and two died before they could be interviewed.

<sup>14</sup> Professor Tobias, in the 2009 SABC Sunday series programme *Who do You think you are?* discusses the presence of the "Bakololo" or "Makololo" in southern Africa. Among the Sesotho publications that mention this piece of information is Zachariah Likotsi Hoeane (1982:64) who explains that the "Makololo" are the great grandchildren of the Bafokeng chief, Sebetwane, who were dispersed to Zambia from South Africa by the "difaqane" war. Reference to the same issue was mentioned by Mokhatlo oa Litichere tsa Sesotho (Sesotho Teachers Association) in a Sesotho teaching workshop in 2007 where they were discussing the teaching of the Bafokeng prince and warrior (Tšepe Toloane) praise poems collected in Mangoaela's *Lithoko tsa Marena a Basotho* (2013).

## **1.8 Structure of the argument**

The thesis is divided into the following chapters:

- Chapter one is the introduction. The author focusses on the thesis' context, aims, objective and questions.
- Chapter two is the literature review. A summary is provided of the studies that contain authoritative knowledge on the research problem.
- Chapter three is the theoretical framework. The theory of ethnicity is discussed in terms of Gellner and Smith's views in relation to the question of this thesis.
- Chapter four, five and six discuss the similarities of the Sotho in terms of cultural, social and political dimensions respectively to establish the oneness of the Sotho people.
- Chapter seven is the conclusion. An evaluation, assessment and summary of the main conclusions that were discussed and interpreted, is provided.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to understand the cultural, social and political similarities of the Bafokeng, Bakuena and Bataung lineages amongst the Sotho groups to establish whether the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi are one people. The thesis positions itself within the context of a variety of literature, i.e. books, articles, theses and dissertations that have dealt with the three areas of the cultural, social and political definition of Sotho groups.

The literature focuses on the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana with regard to their cultural, social and political dimensions. One Sotho group is discussed at a time, although the similarity between the Sotho groups is alluded to. Chapter two is thematic in nature, as it discusses the abovementioned literature regarding the cultural, social and political definition of the Sotho groups respectively in order to systematically establish the oneness of the Sotho in their cultural, social and political dimensions in depth.

#### 2.2 Cultural definition of the Sotho groups

Different scholars have defined the cultural similarity of Sotho groups. The thrust of their argument is that the Sotho groups share a similar language in that they choose similar words at random from the same corpus to express the same idea. Their language becomes their cultural representation. Similar actions and co-ownership of practices make them develop one language.

Amongst scholars that discuss the cultural similarity of the Sotho, Guma (1980) says that there are definite ways and linkages or similarities in which Sotho proverbs discuss the oneness of the Sotho, e.g.:

Southern Sotho:       *Bitso-lebe ke seromo* (A bad name is an omen)

Setswana:             *Ina -lebe seromo* (A bad name is an omen)

Southern Sotho:       *Kgomo ya lebese ha e itswale* (A good milker does not beget itself)

Setswana:                    *Ena-maši ga e itsale* (A good milker does not beget itself)  
(Guma, 1980:95)

Guma (1980:95) shows that Sesotho proverbs are similar to those of Setswana regarding grammar, sentence structure and presentation of similar concepts. Guma (1980:95) mentions that a similar situation occurs with the Sepedi. The following are examples of Sepedi and Sesotho proverbs that are similar:

Southern Sotho:	<i>Thamahane ha di robale mmoho</i> (Two of a trade seldom agree)
Northern Sotho:	<i>Bahlale babedi ha ba fohlelane peba</i> (Two of a trade seldom agree)
[Setswana:	<i>Dipooga di ke di tlhakanela lesaka le le lengwe</i> (Two of a trade seldom agree)]
Southern Sotho:	<i>Ho lwana badula-mmoho.</i> (Those who stay together often quarrel)
Northern Sotho:	<i>Kgomo ho hlabana tsa saka le tee.</i> (Those who stay together often quarrel)

(Guma, 1980:95)

The thesis adds the Setswana proverb to Guma (1967) of the similarity of the Sotho language concepts in the above examples. This thesis considers Guma's (1980:95) view and further discusses that the words are similar amongst the three variations of the Sotho language, although each Sotho language might prefer to use particular words compared to others while constructing a similar oral text, as in the case of the proverbs above. The sharing of words show that the Sotho were together and when they had a need to talk about particular concepts in their social world, they developed a set of words for this purpose. Yule (2007:218) says talking about shared vocabulary influences how a people perceive the world. The thesis adds that a people, such as the Sotho groups, share folklore that mirrors their similar experiences or practices.

Guma (1980:94) mentions that the Sesotho proverbs use a vocabulary and unusual form of grammar that are seldom used in everyday Sesotho, while this kind of grammar and vocabulary is widely used by the Northern Sotho (Sepedi) and Setswana. Yule (2007:217) calls the similar words that a people exchange when referring to a particular concept, a category. The vocabulary inherits a group of similar words in meaning as category labels. The thesis complements Guma

(1980) and Yule (2007) in that these similar words refer to concepts that the Sotho, as a people, wanted to talk about when they were together. Hence, each group or any Sotho formation is at liberty to select any of the words when presenting their ideas. The thesis explains that the selection of various words meaning the same thing across the groups means that the Sotho collectives who have formed groups can be traced from one origin.

In Guma's collection, the Sepedi proverb *kgomo ho hlabana tsa saka le tee* (the cows that lock horns at each other are from one kraal) is similar to the ordinary Sesotho expression, *kgomo tse hlabanang di fumanwa ka (le) sakeng le le leng*. Therefore, the thesis contends that the Sotho groups share a collection of words. The expression indicating one *tee* has translated its place in contemporary every day spoken Sesotho from a descriptive adjective found in Sepedi to become an idiophone *to!* in Sesotho.

The thesis adds to Guma's view and shows that while the same concept across the Sotho groups might be presented in various forms across the Sotho respectively, the concept does not become a different concept but is a similar word, idea or concept presented in various ways. This shows that the Sotho have the same origin as is shown by their similar language, which varies according to how the group wants to present it. A similar situation is found with the Sesotho counterpart of the Sepedi proverb *ho lwana madula-mmoho* (those who stay together fight) (c.f. Guma 1980:94). Sekese (2011:165) presents it in his collection of Sesotho proverbs "*ho loana ba-lula-'moho*". Sometimes it is presented in the Mosotho (Southern Sotho) everyday language, "*ntoa ke ea malula mmoho*" (a fight is for those who stay together).

The thesis adds the view that various presentations of a similar proverb in the same language show that each utterance of a language is not the same although it might be the same sentence, as a proverb is oral in nature. The thesis will show that this situation is similar to that of the two orthographies of Sesotho that indicate variations in the way of writing Sesotho that developed amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) of South Africa and those of Lesotho in order to identify their sovereignty while the international boundaries were drawn to separate similar people into two countries. The thesis will add that the boundaries of orthography are discounted by the same

language and that the similar situation might have occurred amongst the Bapedi when they developed their own group separate from the Basotho (Southern Sotho).

According to Mokwana (2009:32), the Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) were together, but as the Bapedi chiefdom developed, they formed their own group and claimed a separate territory different from that of the Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho). Mokwana (2009:32 quoting Prinsloo, 1979), has this to say:

The literature from Prinsloo (1979) mentions that the Bapedi migrated from somewhere in central Africa to Southern Africa through Botswana. This is where they came into close contact with the Batswana people, as is evidenced in their linguistic borrowing from Batswana. At Gaborone, the Bapedi separated into two groups. One group joined the Batswana and another group went further south to occupy an area called Lesotho. While in Lesotho, a conflict brewed between Sekhukhune I and his brothers. The problem was solved by allowing Sekhukhune and his followers to claim their own territory across the Vaal River, which served as a boundary between the two conflicting groups. Sekhukhune held his first "*Mphato*"(initiation school) called "*Makwa*" at the river, which was subsequently named "*Lekwa*".

At the time that Mokwana (2009) mentions, there was no historical or geographical place called "Lesotho". Although Mokwana (2009) calls the area Lesotho when the Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) were still together, the country and the name was acknowledged much later when the area was separated from the Freestate and (modern) Lesotho came into being in 1966, when Basutholand achieved independence.

Ellenberger (1997) mentions that the Bafokeng left Botswana and settled south of the Highveld where they were followed by other lineages who liked their governance. The Bapedi lineage was one of the lineages who followed the Basotho (Southern Sotho), as Mokwana (2009:32) and Ellenberger (1997:20) mention that the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi were together.

Mokwana (2009) shows that Sekhukhune 1 showed leadership qualities while among the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and took his people of the Bapedi to form another Sotho kingdom. Sekhukhune boasted about his achievement of having a country by saying, *naga ya ka e tloha Lekwa, e fella kwa Lebepe* (my country stretches from Lekwa [Vaal] to Lebepe [Limpopo]) (c.f. Pitje, 1950:56).

The thesis will assert that similarities between the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana exist because they were once together. Mokwana (2009:32) also attests to Sepedi being similar to Setswana, but omits to mention that there are also similarities between the Sepedi and Sesotho. Consequently, this thesis will give a systematic explanation of the Sotho language to show that similarities exist across the Sotho groups, as they come from the same origin.

The thesis will show that as the Sotho moved around to find their separate territories and settled in different places, the geographical distance could also have played a part in the usage of language and the development of language variations. The Sotho groups developed three various local conventions of language according to each group of the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana, i.e. the differences in the language of the Sotho are not original, but are artificial variations that can be discounted, as the languages of the Sotho are similar and of one origin.

Guma (1980:94) adds another dimension to the variety of Sotho languages showing the same origin, e.g. the Sesotho proverbs, *bohweru ha bo na molai* (thieving propensities are incurable) and *boroka bwa duma* (things are favourable for you). These Sesotho (Southern Sotho) proverbs consist of words that are seldom used in contemporary Sesotho everyday language. Although there is nothing unusual about the grammar in the above Sesotho proverbs, the words *bohweru* and *boroka* are still often used by the Sepedi and Setswana speakers.

During the Sotho news slot on SABC 2, a Mopedi lady 'Malibuseng Sebatana, who presents the weather, normally says to the news presenter after he has read news, *Khaitse di ya Baroka ke leboha lesokwana* (My brother from the Baroka clan, thanks for the slot). The sentence is also similar in Sesotho and Setswana, with a variation in Setswana of *leboga* instead of *leboha* in



Sesotho and Sepedi. The difference is [ga] instead of [ha], but the meaning of the word is the same.

The word *baroka* is predominant among the Bapedi and is the variation of *boroka* meaning *ho ba wa Baroka* (to be one of the Baroka's), which is a Sotho clan of the rain queen Modjadji, associated with the Bapedi lineage. The words associated with this clan are found in the above Sesotho proverb. Actually, the entire above Sesotho proverb is regarded as being made from archaic Sesotho words in a contemporary Sepedi sentence. The Mopedi would say *Ke duma nama* (I yearn for meat) instead of the Sesotho *ke lakatsa nama* (Guma, 1980:94).

The Mosotho often choose to use *lakatsa* (yearn) instead of *duma* that a Mopedi uses, in their respective languages. The Batswana use the word *bohwerwa* found in Sepedi, written as *bogwerwa* where the [h] of the Bapedi becomes [kg] in their language to mention *lebollo* (initiation). The word in the ordinary language, not the jargon (special language) of *lebollo*, means friendship and is often used by the Batswana and Bapedi, while the Basotho (Southern Sotho) prefer *mokgotsi* or *motswalla*. This thesis is in line with Guma's view above when it shows that the Sotho use a similar collection of words in their language; the difference is in how they prefer to use the words, as the above examples show.

According to Guma (1980:94), the Sesotho dictionary explains *bohwerwa* as "crowd, noise, joy" and "company of boys at circumcision". Breutz (1991) amongst the Batswana, Monnig (1967) amongst the Bapedi, and Ellenberger (1997) amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho), show that the initiation institution that teaches the Sotho people their culture and social way of life is similar across the three groups. The thesis expands on the above literature sources, as it describes the similarity between the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi. It will discuss Sotho groups sharing the same words because of giving these groups a similar outlook.

Breutz (1991) attempts to include the Bapedi in his discussion and draws similarities between the Bapedi and Batswana. He mentions that he cannot talk about the Basotho (Southern Sotho) in depth, as it is the speciality of Ellenberger. However, Ellenberger (1997) focuses more on the definition of Sotho as he observes it among the Basotho (Southern Sotho), discounting the

Bapedi and Batswana. This thesis will include all the Sotho groups in its discussion and will show that all the Sotho groups have a similar institution of *lebollo* that shows their similar origin. Consequently, the word *lebollo* and other initiation terms are reflected across the three varieties of Sesotho, Sepedi and Setswana. This thesis discusses *lebollo* in detail, as a similar social way of life amongst the Sotho groups below.

The thesis will add to the above perception regarding the definition of Sotho. This research will argue that language normally is a vehicle of people's beliefs, customs and values and this makes it a fundamental cultural aspect. Franz (1930:149) says that the missionaries published and expressed Sotho cultural traits in books and other materials such as the *Leselinyana* newspaper. The missionaries printed oral narratives of Sotho customary norms, values and customs in order to understand the language. This thesis complements Franz's (1930) outlook and contextualises it into contemporary times.

Machobane and Manyeli (2001:21-22) agree with Franz (1930:149) and say the Basotho language vocabulary is laden with their beliefs and customs, e.g. a certain collection of words such as *lebollo* (initiation institution), *mophato* (initiation hut) and *bogwera* (age group that went to the initiation school together) refer to the processes of the initiation school amongst the Sotho. The thesis complements Franz (1930) and Machobane and Manyeli (2001:21-22) by saying that the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana share the same words that are laden with their similar customs and beliefs, as a result the vocabulary of the three groups reflects a similar outlook across the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho).

The thesis further argues that the perception of Franz (1930:149) and Machobane and Manyeli (2001:21-22) that the Basotho language is laden with their customs and beliefs is also noticeable among the similar proverbs and idioms of the Sotho. The idiomatic expression,

i. *ho qela mohope wa metsi* (Sesotho)

[To ask for a calabash of water]

(to ask for a girl's hand in marriage).

ii. *Go kgopela sego sa meetse*(Sepedi)

[To ask for calabash that draws water]

(to ask for a girl's hand in marriage)

iii. *Go kopa sego sa metsi* (Setswana)

[To ask for a calabash that draws water]

(to ask for a girl's hand in marriage),

is indicative of the initial Sotho marriage process across the Sotho groups. The thesis will further discuss literature that explains social dimension and will incorporate Franz's perspective by using vocabulary to explain the similarity of the Sotho social dimension that shows their same origin.

Crystal (1985:102) has this to say with regard to the variations of a similar language:

Regional or socially distinctive variety of language is identified by a particular set of words and grammatical structures. Spoken dialects are usually also associated with a distinctive pronunciation or accent. Any language with reasonably a large number of speakers will develop dialects especially if there are geographical barriers separating groups of people from each other, or if there are divisions of social class. One dialect may predominate as the official or standard form of the language and this is the variety, which may come to be written down.

The argument that Crystal puts forward is that people who are identified by a single set of grammar structures and words, which in linguistic terms is called langue, are similar. Their languages are only a variation of each other. The languages are not different; by variation is meant there are artificial differences, e.g. geographical differences, as mentioned above. Therefore, the thesis will elaborate on the fact that Sepedi, Sesotho and Setswana are derived from the same langue.

The literature above also shows another angle to these similar varieties of the three groups with regard to their language divergence. The Sepedi proverbs seem to be similar to Sesotho and absent in Setswana, although they contain the attitudes, beliefs, norms and customs that cover the three groups. The Setswana also share the proverbs with the Sesotho that translate into sentiments with Sesotho and Sepedi, while these proverbs are absent amongst the Pedi.

Damane (1993:7) and Ellenberger (1997) mention that the Basotho (Southern Sotho) imparted the Sotho language and culture to other nations:

*Bafokeng ke bona ba baholo hara liboko tsohle tsa Basotho le Batswana .... E ne e le batho ba itlhomphang haholo, 'me ba boloka lebitso le letle la Basotho ka mekhoha ea bona e metle, e kang ea ho tena; 'me lichabana tseo ba ahileng le tsona, tsa boloka puo ea bona tsa boloka le meetlo ea Sesotho ka baka la bona.*  
(Damane, 1993:7)

(Bafokeng are the senior lineage among the clans of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana ... They were people who respected themselves a great deal, as a result they kept the good name of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) with good manners such as proper dressing; Other little nations (Sotho clans) therefore kept their Sesotho language and culture because of them).

The Bafokeng, as a senior lineage, influenced the other Sotho clans and lineages to such an extent that the latter even used the Bafokeng language (Damane, 1993). The thesis agrees with Damane (1993) and uses it as a source to show that the Sotho group's language similarity shows that the Sotho are from the same origin.

Ellenberger (1997), mentions that the two lineages of the Bafokeng and Barolong once lived together in Botswana. Later the Bafokeng decided to move to the south. In their translation of the

collection of Sesotho praise poems *Notes on Names, Orthography and Pronunciation*, Damane and Sanders (1974: iv-v) see this area as modern Lesotho having neighbours like the Free State in South Africa. These Bafokeng, together with other Sotho communities under their jurisdiction, were later called the Basotho (Southern Sotho):

The Africans who now live in Lesotho and the neighbouring areas of the Republic of South Africa refer to themselves as *Basotho (Southern Sotho)*. Among the historians, they have often been referred to as Basuto, or the Basutos, and among anthropologists, as the Southern Sotho, in order to distinguish them from the Northern and the Western Sotho, although these divisions were not marked until the second half of the nineteenth century. Since the practice of dispensing with the prefixes is being widely adopted, and since the Northern Sotho may be called the Pedi and the Western Sotho may be called the Tswana, we here refer to them simply as Sotho. Following common usage, however, we also use this term to refer in particular to those Sotho who came under the rule of Moshoeshoe, who may be regarded as the founder of the Sotho chiefdom, although in fact there were many Sotho [chiefdoms] like Sekonyela's Tlokoa, who at first remained independent. (Damane & Sanders, 1974:iv)

Crystal (1985) mentions that a large population of similar people's language is likely to create variations (dialects). This is due to their movement with regard to geographical location and not being in contact often because of distance. The views of Damane and Sanders (1974) and Crystal (1985) will motivate this thesis to establish the similarities in the languages of the Sotho groups.

In *Notes on Names, Orthography and Pronunciation*, Damane and Sanders (1974:iv-v) also show that the collection of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) praise poems are co-owned by three groups and reflect their various languages. The thesis will discuss the translation of Damane and Sanders in detail to define the Sotho as being a similar people and the thesis will use the various languages as a resource. The thesis seeks to explain the oneness of the Sotho in discussing that

the three variations of the Sotho language developed due to extra linguistic factors i.e. selecting which words to use from the same language, not that the Sotho are a different people with different languages. The thesis will therefore show that the Sotho are similar and there is no real distinction between their languages as they are a variety of a similar language.

Mokwana (2009:10) mentions that the Bapedi are known by their official language, Sepedi, and can be identified by its use in Limpopo and surrounding areas in Gauteng, such as Pretoria (Pitje, 1950). Mokwana (2009) argues that although the Bapedi speak an official Sotho language in the form of Sepedi, they have various dialects according to the different Bapedi chiefdoms.

This thesis accepts Mokwana's view that there are several varieties of a community language amongst the Sotho groups due to the formation of chiefdoms. However, the thesis argues that since the languages of the Sotho communities are variations of a similar language, the Sotho people are similar. The thesis draws the similarity of the three Sotho groups, Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho, not only at the chiefdom level of a group, as Mokwana (2009) has done, but also at the group level. The thesis would like to establish that in their contention of power, the Sotho regrouped themselves into three independent communities, the Batswana, Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho), but that the groups became a variation of similar people. The central chiefdoms in these groups established their variations of the Sotho language into prestigious or official languages of law and other specialities in Sotho societies, but these varieties are versions of a similar language representing a similar people.

Herskovits (1948:44) says, "Language is a system of vocal signs that are arbitrary" i.e. people have a set of words and these words can be selected to form sentences. Rodman and Fromkin (1974:42-44) share the same view as Herskovits and add that every normal language in the world is arbitrary with regard to its linguistic sign i.e. form and meaning go together and linguistic sounds and meaning are inseparable. Herskovits (1948:44) and Rodman and Fromkin (1974:42-44) mention that every time a person uses vocal signs or words, a person is free to use the same words to speak other intelligible sentences. Herskovits (1948:44) goes on to say the members of a social group use these collectives of words to interact and cooperate with each other i.e. it has

an influence on people with regard to learning a particular way of life that continues to exist as it is embodied in language, although it can be modified according to changing times.

This thesis is motivated by Herskovits' view. The above arguments show that the Sotho people share a similar collective of words that can help them cooperate with each other. The initiation ceremony where the Sotho learn similar practices and a way of life through their language is an example, as it has existed since they were first together to the present time after they have spread. This thesis will discuss Herskovits in relation to the Sotho collection of words as they are shared by the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi and where their preferences of using the words differs.

Damane and Sanders (1974:iv-v) add that despite the various ways that anthropologists and historians used to identify the Southern Sotho as Basuto, the original name "Basotho" became more official. The Western Sotho officially became Batswana and their Sotho variation of the language became Setswana, while their original name Basotho receded. This thesis will add to the discussion of Damane and Sanders (1974: iv-v) that the name "Basotho" is a cultural representation of the Sotho. It will discuss the co-ownership of the Sotho heritage and the similar outlook among the three Sotho groups.

Apart from language and the name "Basotho" as representations of the Sotho cultural similarities, Ellenberger (1997:38) alludes that Basotho (Southern Sotho) came from Ntswanatsatsi. Breutz (1967) also found a similar historical narrative amongst the Batswana, and Monnig (1967) and Mokwana (2009:32) give a similar account amongst the Bapedi. The thesis establishes that the three Sotho groups are similar in that they share a myth of origin as they once did when together.

The fact that the Sotho people originate from one root as the people from Ntswanatsatsi is acknowledged by Ellenberger (1997) and Ashton (1967) amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho); Breutz (1991) among the Batswana; and Monnig (1967), Mokwana (2009) and Pitje (1950) among the Bapedi. However, they mention the similarity of the Sotho as a people in passing, as they concentrate on an indepth discussion of the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi in isolation. The thesis complements these previous studies by defining the origin of the Sotho as

a people coming from their fictitious land of Ntswanatsatsi as the source of their similarity and oneness by broadening the explanation to include the Bapedi, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana.

### **2.3 Social similarity of Sotho groups indicating significant stages of life.**

Literature that defines the Batswana, Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) such as Breutz (1991), Monnig (1967) and Ellenberger (1997) also discusses the Sotho groups according to their social dimension i.e. their significant life stages, the raising of children, arriving at manhood and womanhood and the handling of death, which are epitomised by means of the *lebollo* (initiation school). This section analyses the literature that defines the Sotho with regard to their common institution of *lebollo* that has imparted the Sotho with similar lifecycle practices i.e. war techniques, the handling of birth and growth, woman and manhood, family care and death. The literature also analyses similar Sotho oral folklore i.e. riddles, folktales, proverbs and praise poems, that complement the Sotho initiation school by describing the Sotho as a people with similar practices of marriage, childbirth, raising children and death practices, although they have formed three groups i.e. the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho).

Barber (1989:1) says the present literature is significant in exploring the literariness of the oral texts, as it investigates whether oral folklore can be categorised as modern genre in terms of stylistics analysis, e.g. Guma (1980) and Kunene (1971) describe folklore as poetry, drama or narratives such as short stories, proverbs and riddless. Guma (1980:3) describes *tshomo* sometimes translated ‘folk-tale’ as a collective word. Guma (1980) classifies traditional Sotho short stories that he identifies as myths, legends, folk-tale and fables. He identifies the characterisation, themes, plot and the development of the stories indicating the narrativeness and the four types of *ditshomo* (plural of *tshomo*). The thesis seeks to complement Guma’s (1980) work and explain that these traditional short stories significance is that their function is to portray the life experiences of the Sotho and remind the Sotho how to handle the growing up of children, the youth development with regard to *lebollo*, death and birth practices.

Guma (1980:19) describes *Nkolobe* or *Moshanyana le Moriana* (The Boy and the Medicine) as a myth. It is a romantic myth that narrates love, relationship and sex between men and women



(Guma 1980, p.6 & 19). Nkolobe as the main character in the story is a boy who eats the medicine that he is told by his mother not to eat. Nkolobe tastes the medicine while on the way and no body is watching. He finds it delicious and finishes it. He then falls pregnant.

The thesis explains folktales like Nkolobe above as describing the bringing up of a Sotho child. The folktale explains to the children that according to Sotho tradition, children are not expected to conceive and give birth to children. The hiding of the child in a cave and staying alone in a hut full of smoke are indicative of the hardship of isolation and hiding one's unusual pregnancy. The child needs to bond with his mother but the child might be taken away as the parents of Nkolobe do, and this might cause a psychological turmoil for both the mother and the child. Moments of joy as when Nkolobe is able to feed his child in this situation are gained after much sufferance as a result it is not a worth while exercise for the youth. They need to have a fully developed body. The boy has to recite a poem so that the breasts can come out before he can feed his own child. One is both the father and mother which is very unusual under the normal circumstances of Sotho child when she or he is born.

This situation is related to the Sotho proverb found across the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi that says *Mmapoho ha a nyalwe* (the one who begets a male child before wedlock is not married). The thesis seeks to show that a social practice is portrayed in more than one type of Sotho genre to indicate its importance in the similar life practices of Sotho. In the aforementioned proverb, the male child of a mother as a single parent becomes the part of his mother's family as a result the mother has to look out for his traditional practices needs. If she gets married some of the child's aspirations are not fulfilled because she is away. Nkolobe relates to exposing young children and the youth that it is a bad idea to have children outside the wedlock. Sex is given a euphemistic nature of language that the young person and children will understand by saying it is a medicine taken by a boy. The medicine is a metaphor as the boy begets the child after taking it. According to this thesis the metaphor is not just a stylistic device, it is a form of approach that help parents to communicate difficult issues to the children as they grow up through literature. Guma (1980) describes Sotho oral literature as a form of literature that can be identified by its stylistic devices such as metaphor that conform to the universal forms of the similar literature around the world. In addition the thesis shows that Sotho literature in this

form has a function and context in which they are performed to describe the Sotho life. This is with regard to practices that include childbirth, the bringing up of children, marriage and death practices.

Finnegan (2012) mentions that oral literature in Africa stores the social practices, of a people. Finnegan (2012) provides a general discussion of African folklore. She says oral genres are in the form of poetry such as panegyric praise poems, elegiac dirges and divining praises. There are also special purpose poetry like work songs and children songs such as lullabies and nursery rhymes. The African oral literature also includes proverbs, riddles, drama for example puppet shows, Bushmen plays and folk tales. The thesis seeks to position itself with Finnegan's outlook that oral literature is the way of conserving social practices of a people in Africa.

Finnegan (2012) is supported by Wee Sew\* (2015:13) who mentions that oral literature is a repository of a people's social practices. Wee Sew\* (2015) gives an example of idiomatic expressions and says they "contain certain meanings that conserve the common cultural and logical beliefs of a particular speech community." The present study would clarify that most of the oral genre's intention that Finnegan (2012) discusses above conserves the values, customs and beliefs that are common to a speech community. The thesis agrees with Finnegan (2012) and Wee Sew\* (2015) but will narrow down their contribution to Sotho folklore in order to understand the similarity of the Sotho looking at their political, social and cultural aspects as they are interpreted by their oral literature to establish whether the Sotho are one.

Bahta (2014: 170) and classical writers such as Bascom (1953) discuss folklore as a heritage of a people. But Bahta (2014:170) also agrees with Leach (1949) and Dorson (1972) that folklore portrays material objects and rituals of the society. Bahta is of the contention that verbal heritage in the form of oral literature has a way of portraying the usage of material objects, rituals and the spiritual components that form a particular community.

The following riddle that Guma (1980:43) has collected teaches children and adults that need to know about Basotho (Southern Sotho) activities the importance of a grinding stone.

Q: *Kgarebe tsa lapa leno?*

(Dames of your family?)

A: *Ditsheetso tsa lelwala.*

(Small but powerful stones supporting a grinding stone.)

The surface meaning of the above genre or riddle relates a narrative that there are girls or a women in a Sotho homestead. These female members of the family are compared to supportive stones of a grinding stone in the answer. The hidden meaning or the denotative meaning is to teach the children that girls, and other female members in the family do home chores such grinding, cooking and looking after the family. In this way the female members are supporting the family. The above riddle also makes children understand the proverb or idiomatic expression *ho kopa mohope wa metsi/ to ask for a calabash of water* (to ask for a girl's hand in marriage) found across Sotho groups. It is expected that a girl will draw water as one of her household chores as she is compared to a calabash that draws water, i.e. *mohope/sego/sekgelello* as a metaphor used in the riddle to indicate a Sotho utensil used by women and girls of the family to draw water from the well. The young women will give life to the family, life also means giving birth to the future members of the family is presented through the 'water'. 'Water' becomes the metaphor for the woman bringing life in the world, apart from showing everyday chore of a woman drawing water.

The riddle also explains the importance of female relatives to the child. The female figures as portrayed by a metaphor of stones are very strong in empowering the family either as mothers who have once been daughters in law, who are also maternal or partenal aunts and sisters. Sekese (2011) explains that during marriage, a girl's partenal aunt – *rakgadi* (a female father) a term used across Sotho groups, plays an important role when the girl – her brother's daughter is married.

The following riddle is collected by Guma (1980:43) to show the form of the riddle as a statement question, similar to other forms of riddles in the world.

Q: *Phate di ya lekana?*

(Bedding skins are of equal length and breadth?)

A: *lehodimo le lefatshe*

(Heaven and earth)

This thesis seeks to show the riddle is also a Sotho relating to the supernatural world and understanding geographical features. Heaven and the earth size, appearance and positions are compared to blankets. Blankets that are used to cover the bed are compared to the earth and the ones on top that a person wears while this person sleeps are compared to heaven ~ firmament. God who is the one that created the natural act of sleep is in heaven. The riddle might also refer to health issues that children should be aware that sleep is a natural health need and it is necessary after a day's work.

The surface part of a riddle question also relates one of the items that the Sotho use. It is *phate* (blanket) or *diphate* (blankets.) It reflects one of the chores of the Sotho men of using hides to make blankets once they have slaughtered an animal from game or their flock, while the women of the family cook meat. The riddle might also remind the players of the proverb *phalo e eme le lesemela* (the utensil used for softening the hide for blanket making is entangled). The proverb means there is a problem, people are in difficulty. Comparing the riddle and the proverb, the players are told by this Sotho folklore that a Sotho man takes time to prepare a blanket which is a difficult work. He might have also gone for hunting and slaughtered an animal so that the members of the family can have blankets to sleep. The thesis will explain that folklore, for example riddles portray the Sotho world of among others the Sotho daily chores and their ways, how they are performed, the purpose of performing them and what material is used to perform them. The thesis also explains that the folklore explains the norm of the division of labour among men and women in the society.

Sometimes the description of social practices as in the situation above is described by more than one form of an oral genre. An example is the depiction of making a blanket among the Sotho as in the riddle *phate di a lekana?* (blankets are equal) and the proverb *phalo e eme le lesemela* (the utensil used for softening the hide for blanket making is entangled). This situation is important for

this thesis, as a variety of oral genres that discuss a similar Sotho social practice provide a wider data to discuss the similarity of Sotho across the groups.

For example there is a following riddle collected by Makopo (1993: 100), *baloi ba bina ka legageng, ba kgahla dingaka* (The witches are singing in the cave, they are calling attention of traditional healers) in Sepedi. It is also found amongst other Sotho groups as in *baloi ba bina/ qabana ka lehaheng* (The witches are singing/ wrestling in the cave - Southern Sotho/ Sesotho) in Segoete (2015). The riddle is also there in Setswana folklore. Furthermore it is similar to the idiomatic expression in Setswana, *ho apeha digkobe* (to cry), that literally means to cook grains. The answer of the riddle is also similar, it is boiled grains. The thesis seeks to show that the Sotho groups have similar social practices such as the methods of cooking and the traditional dishes to show that they are similar people as they were once together.

Furthermore the above riddle shows that people learn that there are different spiritual beings that are bad in the form of witches and those that are of help like the traditional healers indicating similar traditional practices amongst the Sotho. The analysis of Sotho folklore examples resonate with the above literature such as Bahta (2014) and Dorson (1972) when they say folklore portrays the verbal heritage as a form of literature that explains material objects and rituals that define a society. The thesis will use the collection of Sotho oral folklore amongst the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) as its data to explain that oral literature portrays the Sotho ways of life and these ways of life in turn help describe the similarity of the Sotho groups.

While some Sotho folklore remains unwritten, attempts have been made to publish a collection of folklore. The collections will help in defining the oneness of the Sotho as mentioned above. Classical works ensued as early as 1893 when Azariel Sekese published *Mekhoa le Maele a Basotho* (Ways and Proverbs of Basotho). Its latest edition is 2011. Reverend Jacottet published *Litšomo tsa Basotho* (Folktales of the Basotho) in 1909. Furthermore Segoete published a collection of Sesotho riddles, other ways of Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Values in *Raphepheng* (1913). Mangoaela (1997) is also a classical published collection of Basotho praise poems. Makopo (1993) is a collection of Sepedi folktales, proverbs, idioms and riddles. Serudu (1990) also published a collection of Sepedi folktales, praise poems of chiefs, animals, traditional

healing and others. Furthermore there are proverbs and riddles in his collection. Motana (2004) published the collection of Sepedi proverbs. The thesis will use the collections such as Segoete (2015) and Makopo (1993) above as a part of data to draw the similarities of the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho ways of life.

Bahta (2014: 170) mentions that:

Society and folklore are two faces of the same coin.... There is no society without folklore and vice versa. Once a certain folklore by a given society, it does not remain a passive object [it is a] (mirror) that reflects the society; it is rather a mould that shapes a given community to behave in a certain way.

The above quotation says folklore is a reflection of its society or a definition of a society which means its identity. Scott (2014: 328-329) explains identity as membership of a people practicing the same culture. In this case culture is the same values, customs, and beliefs. As a result the thesis will discuss that a member practising the culture can be connected to the entire society that has the similar way of life. People have a way of doing things that explains their similarity that is reflected by their folklore when it portrays their customs, norms and value systems. Examples above are chastity and purity before marriage expressed in the folktale Nkulube as a value system.

Furthermore there is a custom of marriage and the division of labour as a norm for example in cooking, looking after animals and children. An example is a folklore piece that is similar amongst the Sotho groups, it explains the origin of sorghum as a staple food. It further mentions the types of families where sometimes accidents occur and one finds orphans and marriages including polygamy and experiences of wives seeking attention of one husband. Serudu (1990:62) in Northern Sotho (Sepedi) gives its title as *Mabele a tswa kae?* (Where does Sorghum Come From?) The Sesotho title is *Moleso wa Dikgomo* (Cows' Fodder). The thesis will compare the life practices of the Sotho groups as they are portrayed in their folklore to establish whether the three groups of Sotho are one people.

Kunene (1971) establishes the Sotho traditional *dithoko* (praise poems) as a form of poetry by analysing it in terms of figures of speech, stanzas, rhyme and parallelism and discusses the themes in the respective praise poems of the individual. In the interpretation, the oral poetry is indicative of initiation school tutelage and therefore marks the coming of age as a stage or a lifecycle within the social context of Sotho. The thesis will discuss that it is because of the similar Sotho initiation practices across the groups that the *seroki* (praise singer) is able to create the praises that record the practices of the Sotho and the genealogy of the people. Praise poems are the highest form of proving manhood; they also record incidents of war where the accomplished Sotho men from the *lebollo* defended their country.

The thesis will also discuss *dithoko* as the highest way of narrating the Sotho life style as it is taught at the initiation school. The thesis will also discuss the skill of fighting that is preliminarily learned by the boys before the initiation school while they are looking after animals in the veld. The boys learn fighting skills by playing games like *ho kalla* (fencing), *seqatamajwana* (fighting with stones) or *ho kgwasa ditadi* (hunting mice in the fields) (c.f. Bereng 2010a:45-46). The discussion of the Sotho praise poem in a social context and its similarity to the Sotho modern poems will add to the importance in Kunene's discussion of *dithoko*. While he looks at *dithoko* as belonging to the Sotho groups, he does not mention the characteristics of the modern poems.

The thesis will use a collection of Sotho praise poems to show the social practices of the Sotho, indicating, for example, becoming a man because of initiation, Sotho chores and games. Moletsane et al (2000) says everyday chores of the Bataung men across the Sotho groups sometimes explained in the praise poems are the smelting of iron, hunting with skill to empower one for example in becoming a warrior and turning leather. The Bataung also made different things like clothes, blankets, dishes like *lekuka* or a milk container and cutlery. The Bataung also hunted for game. Furthermore the Bataung looked after animals that they used in other practices like death, marriage ceremony, birth and other happenings in their society. Manyeli and Machobane (2001) discuss similar issues of the social practices, but they say these apply to all lineages in the Basotho group.

This thesis would like to discuss the social practices of the Sotho within a broader spectrum of their similarity across the three groups. Moletsane et al (2000) shows that Bataung are found in places in the Highveld from Northwest to Freestate and Lesotho. Moletsane et al (2000) is further in agreement with chief Moletsane I praise poems in Mangoaela (1997). Chief Moletsane discusses similar places like Lehurutse (Zeerust and Northwest) of the Batswana including Matlwangtlwang which is the present Swaziland where the Sotho land under jurisdiction of chief Hlalele was confiscated by the offshoot of the Zulu, hence the saying *Bakone ting lea inahana ye!* E.M. Ramaila as a Motaung among the Bapedi has also published a book entitled *Setlogo sa Batau* (The Origin of the Bataung). The book discusses the Bataung lineage with the outlook of Ramaila as a Mopedi. This literature is of much help as a resource because there is a similarity of social practices noticed between a Sotho lineage across the three groups of the Sotho. Moletsane et al (2000) further mentions that the Bataung used grass, clay, bones and wood for craft. The study will consolidate the information from Moletsane et al (2000), and Machobane and Manyeli (2001) to establish the full picture of the similarity of Sotho social practices.

The thesis adds to the contextual nature of Sotho folklore as it is experienced by its people, by analysing it as a form of literature (Guma, 1980; Kunene, 1971; Damane & Sanders, 1974), and arguing that it is similar across Sotho groups. "Identity" within the social context means the qualities of the Sotho that makes them unique as a people as they associate with one another in their different life stages e.g. practices that relate to birth, childhood, initiation, marriage and death (c.f. Lesitsi, 2002; Bereng, 2010a & b). The thesis analyses the social context of the Sotho to establish the similar life stage practices amongst the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho).

Phafoli (2009) and Phafoli and Zulu (2014) state that oral folklore contains the social practices of the Sotho that define their everyday lives and adds that the social life of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) is reflected in the Sesotho accordion music developed mainly because of the *lebollo* (initiation school). Phafoli and Zulu inform this thesis about the social life of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) through the lens of oral literature. This thesis complements Phafoli by looking



at *lebollo* as a similar social practice amongst all the Sotho groups, as they practice similar norms, customs and values.

*Lithoko tsa Marena a Basotho* (Praise Poems of the Basotho), by Mangoaela (2013) is another publication that indicates the social identity of the Sotho through a collection of oral art forms. Additional examples of this literature are provided by Sebate (2011) and Thobega (1984) amongst the Batswana; Makopo (1993), Serudu (1993) and Mashabela (2000) amongst the Bapedi and Sekese (2011), Lesitsi (2002) and Segoete (2015) amongst the Basotho. Their collections include Sotho riddles, folktales, proverbs, idiomatic expressions that are similar in philosophy and as texts across the Sotho groups, yet the literature in a collection written in the Setswana dialect presents them as peculiar to the Batswana. However, a similar collection and view about these traditional oral texts is found between the Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) (c.f. Guma 1980). This thesis will discuss Sotho folklore to show that it reflects similar social ways amongst the Sotho, and the above Sotho folklore similarity establishes their similar origin and outlook regarding life experiences.

The following is an example of a similar riddle found amongst the three Sotho groups:

Sepedi:Q: *Ntlwana ya Moshate ha e na mojako* (c.f. Serudu 1994:104)

[The house at my home does not have a door]

A: Lee [An egg]

Sesotho:Q: *Ntloe se nang monyako le difenstere* (Oral presentation among Southern Sotho )

[The house that does not have a door and a window]

A: Lehe [An egg]

Setswana:Q: *Ntlo ya etsho e e se nang letlhabaphefo* (c.f. Sebate 2011:68)

[My house that does not have a window]

A: Lee [An egg]

This riddle is an oral game that imparts Sotho norms, customs and values amongst the Sotho children across the three groups. What differs seems to be the version of Sotho dialect that

presents it and a few additions that explain the same thing. The thesis will discuss that the Sotho children are raised with similar values, norms and customs expressed in their games and pastimes.

Serudu (1994:62-63) collected a folktale among the Bapedi about *mabele* as *Mabele a tšwa kae?* (Where does sorghum come from?). A similar folktale appears as *Moleso oa Likhomo* (cows' fodder) in the Jacottet (2015:27) collection of Basotho (Southern Sotho) folktales, and a version of this folktale is found in the oral lore of the Batswana. This shows that the Sotho groups had once been together and they shared traditional food. This thesis suggests that although the Sotho are in different groups, they show similar life experiences that indicate their similar past with regard to their food preparation. The Sotho also shared other social practices that appear in the folktale such as taking care of children, marriage and ploughing amongst the Sotho. The thesis discusses that the Sotho groups exercise similar social practices although they have separated from each other as groups.

Park (2010:476) looks at the "Chineseness as a layered and contested discourse" and moves beyond different groups and segments of the Chinese to describe the Chinese as having their own language, values, and types of food that present their identity as a people. Park (2010:476) says boundaries between a similar people are fluid, as they can be contested. Ndhlovu (2013) argues that similar people appropriate these boundaries in their daily lives and Park (2010) analyses Chinese communities. The study adopts the same view to analyse the Sotho layers. The boundaries of different groups can be appropriated to show that the Sotho, as a collective, have similar food, prepare it in the same way, and have similar values and languages.

Finnegan (1998:2-3) specifically mentions that she discusses oral folklore, as it is performed amongst different African nationalities, by looking at different pieces of oral texts. Her contention is that the oral form of literature is meant for performance, as only then does it come to life. Finnegan (1998) presents different incidences of oral folklore as practiced by Africans e.g. she presents dirges depicting death, the initiation ceremony, and praise poems indicating their creation and teachings at the initiation school, and gives context examples across Africa.

The thesis will add to Finnegan's outlook by analysing the similarity between the Sotho with regard to their lifestages. The thesis will systematically discuss the similarity of the Sotho regarding birth, childhood, initiation, marriage and death, as it informs their origin.

Guma's (1967) discussion of oral folklore is similar to that of Finnegan as he offers a general overview of oral folklore. However, unlike Finnegan, he compares Sesotho oral literature to the whole of Africa and the world. He looks at whether Sesotho oral folklore conforms to the principles of oral literature in general. As a result, he divides *tshomo* (traditional oral narrative of the Sotho) into myth, legend, folktale and fables. His analysis equates Sotho *tshomo* to the classical world oral folklore studies. He does however take into consideration the traditional message to the Basotho (Southern Sotho) of imparting their social life and at other times including the rest of Sotho groups in the form of Bapedi and Batswana. Guma (1967) also compares Sesotho riddles, folksongs, praises such as *dikoma* (initiation praises), animal praises and *dithoko* (praise poems). His discussion on the social similarity of the Sotho groups proves the conformity of Sotho literature to the orality of Sesotho traditional literature in general. The thesis seeks to focus on the social similarity of the Sotho to prove that they are same people.

## **2.4 Political dimension of Sotho groups**

This section analyses the literature that discusses the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi political dimension focusing on the literature's argument that the Sotho groups are a variation of each other, as they have a similar structure of three hierarchical political units. Clans or extended families form a chiefdom and the chiefdom in one area forms a group. The individuals in the group share welfare, power and management that they co-own as a collective. Each political unit oversees the maintenance of law, order, values, customs and norms that keep the Sotho together. A chiefdom or a clan is free to leave a group if they are not satisfied. They can join another group of their choice or become independent due to their contenting structure as a people and political dynamics of the status quo. However, even though the Sotho communities are divorced from their former territory or collective, they still feel attached to it. Hence, they have nostalgia in performing similar practices in governance.

Chief Moletsane of the Bataung addresses chief Moroka of the Barolong amongst the Southern Sotho with a dialect more similar to both of them than the official Sesotho – that of Setaung, peculiar to his lineage to show more closer ties in blood and *intense nostalgia*– that is remembering that they have similar practices that show that they were once together. The rest of his praise poem narration is Southern Sotho or Sesotho, to show allegiance to the Basotho group. He snubs Moroka for being a greedy senior chief to the Bataung, who now has few people around him because of this bad habit and makes a jeer with the following Serolong/ Setaung line, “*Tlhatlha li tlhakhile re tla tjhela ka moka*” where he is addressing Moroka as their language is one. This line is literally translated “all weeds are grown, we shall all gross”. This is a phrase equivalent to the contemporarily common English phrase, there are greener pastures on the other side (lets gross). ‘The other side’ and ‘greener pastures’ in this context of Moletsane of the Bataung and Moroka of the Barolong have joined the Basotho (Southern Sotho) chiefdom of the Bafokeng and the Bakuena.

He laments that his senior chieftaincy will not have more people unlike the Bafokeng and the Bakuena of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) group that Moroka now has also joined although he is a senior chief, his kingdom seems to have shrunk. Hence Moletsane adds the following lines in his praise poem,

*Ekare o jela tlung Morolong, u re u ka lebanya thebe le mang,*

*Thebe o ka e lebanya le Rasefabatho?*

[Due to your greediness Morolong (Moroka) how can you have more warriors,

Can you have more people like *Rasefabatho* ?]

Moletsane in this line mentions that he is not greedy like Moroka. The significance of the above discussion is that any Sotho lineage or person could move from one Sotho chiefdom and join another, especially if they feel that the chief does not take care of them with regard to their welfare. So a more visionary and giving chief would have many people.

According to the Sesotho culture, the chief for example allocates cows to his warriors when they have conquered the war (c.f. Mahao 2011), this seems not to have been the case with Moroka

hence people go away. This particular situation brings forward the following Sotho proverb, *morena ke morena ka batho* meaning, 'a chief is a chief by the people'. He calls himself Rasefabatho, literally meaning a giver of people. This particular argument of chief Moletsane is indicative of the political dynamics of the Sotho in building a society that the present study wants to discuss in order to establish the political similarity of the Sotho groups. The present study will use the Sotho praise poems and proverbs as data to discuss the similarity of the Sotho groups' governance in their political system.

Smith (1956), Ellenberger (1997:20) and Ashton (1967) amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho); Breutz (1991) among the Batswana; and Monnig (1967), Mokwana (2009:32) and Pitje (1950) among the Bapedi, discuss the political dimension of the Sotho. They view that the Sotho community has separated into different communities and agree that two original lineages of the Bahurutse and Bafokeng were joined and even intermarried but that they later separated into two groups i.e. the Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) that are no longer related. They also mention that there was further separation of the Sotho when the Bapedi, a clan that developed through the marriage of the Bahurutse (Batswana) and Bafokeng (Basotho (Southern Sotho))<sup>15</sup> formed another group.

The above literature further mentions that out of the Bahurutse and Bafokeng marriage came different clans such as the Bapedi who grew to be the third major independent Sotho group. Other clans scattered to form smaller communities defined by their boundaries, different totems and venerations. In addition, further clans formed as the original collective broke into many smaller collectives or communities. Moletsane et al (2000), Ellenberger (1997) and Breautz (1991) say that Bataung are coming from Mofurutse I who is sometimes called Mohurutse. Ellenberger (1997) and Breautz (1991) explain Mohurutse as the father of Batswana chiefdom or society. All are mainly descendants of Mohurutse.

Moletsane et al (2000) description is that some lineages amongst the Sotho are bigger because other lineages branch from them. He makes the following example, Bakubung and Dihoja come

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<sup>15</sup> Ellenberger (1997:20) mentions that from the marriage of chief Tabane who emanates from the Bakgatla, the descendants of Bahurutse and 'Mathulare, the daughter of the Bafokeng issued the Bapedi.

from the Bataung. Bahlakwana and Makgwakgwa come from the Bakuena. Five lineages come from five sons of Tabane and Mmathulare as a husband and wife. These are Makgolokwe, Bapedi, Maphuthing, Batlokwa and Basia are from the Bakgatla lineage. There is also relationship in marriage of the Bafokeng who are the original Southern Sotho and Bahurutse in the formation of Bapedi chieftdom. The literature will help the study to build an argument that the Sotho people are one through intermarriage of the Bafokeng and Bahurutse as the main lineages and through the formation of further lineages.

Matšela and Moletsane (2006) in a book called '*Mantlatilane*' make a collection of the Sotho lineage poems indicating the subgroups that make up the entire lineage despite their Sotho groups. The poems show that when the numbers of people in a Sotho lineage grow bigger, the lineage in turn divides into sub lineages for the better management of a society. New heads of the new lineages develop, but they are still related to their bigger lineage. The thesis seeks to consult the collection to show that lineage poems contain history of the Sotho people that help to identify them as a similar people that formed more than one community.

Ellenberger (1997) mentions that after the Bafokeng separated from the Bahurutse, they scattered into small communities or clans in the southern Highveld. The thesis acknowledges that due to political factors, such as colonialism and apartheid, the original Sotho group was scattered into the three groups and even into the three countries of Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa. The objective of the thesis is to prove that they were once one people without denying the current reality of their boundaries as groups as well as their physical boundaries. The value of the thesis is to prove that the Sotho groups were once one, hence their similar ways of governance.

Ellenberger (1997:40) mentions that the Sotho had a loose political structure existing of a council of elders that promoted chieftainship. However, this kind of society expanded and later divided into further independent communities as the elements that were not satisfied with the former chief broke away and formed new communities because they needed resources for their everyday survival.

Van Warmelo (1966:58) says the Southern Sotho have lineages such as the Bafokeng, Batlokwa, Bataung, Bakuena, Makgwakgwa, Makgolokoe, Basia and others. Van Warmelo (1966:60) further mentions that the 'Western Sotho' (Sotho in Western Transvaal) meaning Batswana have lineages such as Bahlaping, Bakuena, Bahurutse, Barolong, Batlharo, Bakubung, Bamangwato, Batawana and Bangwaketse. The Taung village amongst the Batswana in the North West is also named after the Bataung lineage, indicating their presence amongst the Batswana.

Kriel (2010) explains that there are also Bafokeng amongst the Batswana. Furthermore Nhlekisana (11 September 2014) in her presentation of the paper "Batlokwa Culture Day: A Celebration of Cultural Identity and Pride in Botswana" acknowledges the presence of the Batlokoa amongst the Batswana. Van Warmelo (1966: 61-62) again mentions that the Bapedi are composed of the Bataung, Bakuena, Batlounge, Phiri, Baphuthi, Batšhwene, Nare and Nkwe. This thesis will show that the presence of the Bafokeng, Bataung, Bakuena and Barolong across the groups of the Sotho show the similar collection of one people.

Names of lineages that are not found in some groups but are there in other groups show that some lineages decided to call themselves by other names when they decided to form communities. For example Manyeli and Machobane (2001:01) say Bataung and Barolong both call themselves Bafurutse. Since there is no recent lineage called Bafurutse, the two lineages decided to call themselves Bataung and Barolong respectively, when they formed further two communities.

The following chapters will further show that the Sotho formed collectives to utilise more land to manage their economic welfare for the betterment of the entire Sotho. These collectives became today's Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi, as the previous research has shown. This has resulted into smaller communities of the same people in the same area, indicating self-determination where similar people of the same origin form governments next to one another with the same intention of protecting the Sotho identity.

Although Mahao (2011) has also collected and written a narrative of the Bafokeng with a focus on some of its lineages amongst the Southern Sotho, he gives an insight into the political system

of the Sotho that can help the thesis. Mahao (2011:6) talks of the Bafokeng with regard to the governance based on culture, apart from spreading of Sotho communities because there has been fights and discontent, forming Sotho communities is a culture. According to Sesotho culture, the chief's offspring is allowed to leave his homestead and begin a new community by himself. He would walk with the followers from his homestead who are elderly men and his agetates that were at the initiation school with him.

This team of people were divided into different expertise that were intended to help him in the upbringing of the prince, especially in making him a successful chief with regard to good governance. They were the eyes of his father, their purpose was to see that the calibre of his personality, his behaviour and the way he rules are cultured and with respect. The team was supposed to chide him where he goes wrong. The description of how the Bafokeng run the governance informs the present thesis of the culture of governance formation amongst the Sotho. In their leadership, Mahao (2011:7) mentions that the Bafokeng cared about dignity of the chieftaincy or governance. They cared about straightforward justice and proper culture practice. They did not care about wealth benefit when imparting proper governance. In other words, they hated corruption in today's terms. They were trusted as they based their arguments on facts and truth for the sake of proper governance and appropriate practice of culture.

According to Ndhlovu (2013:13), there is also appropriation of borders by similar people where they use their shared language to garner an economy and resources for their welfare. The thesis will base the description of the Sotho on Ndhlovu's view. The thesis will discuss that although borders to make modern nationalities, as in the case of Botswana and North West in South Africa or Lesotho and Freestate, further divided the Sotho groups a group divided by the border that uses a similar dialect continues to use the same language across borders. The Sotho use their similar indigenous language every day to survive as a similar people, hence the continuation of their practices that identify them as Sotho.

The thesis is enriched by Ndhlovu's outlook on the formation of Sotho communities. It will further discuss that the appropriation of borders is also discernible in the Sotho tradition of one community breaking away from the mother community to join the chiefdom of another Sotho



community. For example, Ellenberger (1997) says chief Moroka of the Barolong left the major Batswana chiefdom and joined Moshoeshe I of the Bakuena as one of his dikgoro among the Basotho (Southern Sotho). Historically Bakuena emanate from the Barolong and they use their origin with regard to their ancestry to complement each other in their communities as a chiefdom.

In the *Lesotho Times* (30 September 2010), Khahliso Khama wrote an article entitled "MACUFE Road Show set for Maseru". MACUFE stands for Mangaung Cultural Festival, and the article gives an account of the joint venture between Lesotho and South Africa to celebrate the Southern Sotho culture. This festival is an annual event and its preparations and setting involves Morija in Lesotho and Motheo municipality or Bloemfontein, in Mangaung. Although there are physical boundaries between Lesotho and South Africa, the Basotho (Southern Sotho) in both countries present their similar culture and collaborate with each other in their similar festivals, despite the borders.

Pitje (1956), Kriel (2010), Moletsane et al. (2000), Smith (1956), Ramakhula (2010), Marais (2010) and Moilwe (2010) identify and focus on discussing a traditional political unit larger than the clans amongst the Sotho in the form of a polity or chiefdom. They mention that a chiefdom is a much larger political unit that has more economic muscle and resources amongst the Bapedi, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana groups.

Pitje (1950), Moletsane et al. (2000), Smith (1956) and Ramakhula (2010) provide the structure of this political unit. They mention that a more senior or powerful clan in terms of providing protection and finding resources for people's welfare calls attention to other related clans that choose to join it in order to form a bigger Sotho community. This powerful clan becomes the centre of the governance for this bigger Sotho community. Sometimes the more powerful or superior lineage also chooses to acquire additional clans to be under its jurisdiction through capture to increase the size and power of the chiefdom. Since the smaller Sotho community in the form of a clan or a village join other villages to form a chiefdom, the thesis seeks to regard the clan as the smallest political unit amongst the Sotho. It seeks to show that the Sotho political

systems are similar and the Sotho are therefore a collective people with the same origin because of their similar governance.

Moletsane et al. (2000) gives an example of chief Moletsane's polity of the Bataung amongst the Southern Sotho. The Moletsane polity emanated from Chief Hlalele's chiefdom of the Bataung amongst the Batswana. Smith (1956) gives an example of the Bafokeng polity of chief Sebetwane and Pitje (1950) provides an example of the Bapedi clan polity. The literature mentions each polity in a Sotho chiefdom as it is found in a Sotho group. The thesis complements the previous literature by broadening the definition of the similarity of the Sotho traditional political system. It will synthesise the above explanation of a Sotho chiefdom among the Batswana, Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) in to a single explanation to define the similarity of the Sotho political system across the three groups.

The above literature mentions that the respective collectives of the Sotho lineages have a chiefdom that has been given power by other smaller Sotho communities to oversee the governance of the Sotho people and their protection. They refer to these central lineages as the Moshoeshoe 1 polity amongst the Sotho, Sekhukhune I amongst the Bapedi, and Khama among the Batswana. This thesis aims to complement the previous literature by demonstrating that the Sotho group is the highest form of community amongst the Sotho people. The Sotho community can be described as having three tiers, i.e. a local community of related people form a clan or village, a collective of local communities or villages in the same area form a chiefdom, a collective of chiefdoms in the same region that join together form a group.

Schapera (1934:18) describes this community or political unit structure amongst the Tswana as follows:

The South-Central tribes were divided into *dikgoro* (sing. *kgoro*), groups consisting of a number of families united under the leadership of a *kgosana* (headman), whose position was hereditary in the male line. Most of the *dikgoro* were in most cases directly related either by birth or by marriage to its headman, although this was not necessarily the case.

Children belonged normally to the same *kgoro* as their father. *Kgoro* was essentially a localized administrative unit. Its members lived together in the same ward of the village, and had their own *kgotla* or court, where lawsuits were heard and other local business dealt with under the supervision of headman, assisted by the more important heads of families. The headman was responsible to the chief for all that went on in his *kgoro*; and the headman of all the *digoro* together constituted an advisory council to the chief, being consulted by him in all cases of emergency.

Schapera (1934) discusses the clan as a smallest political unit that the Batswana call *kgoro* (village of related people). The headman of the *kgoro* is hereditary and follows a paternal line. This is where the localised administration of community issues and law are enforced. The headmen of the ward (chiefdom) or region form a larger community and are responsible to the chief for what happens in their villages. These localised small communities are mostly related to the senior family as the head of the chiefdom or polity.

Mahao (2011) mentions the similar structure of the Bafokeng and the Bakuena amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho), and Chief Masopha in Mangoaela (2013:47-49) tells of this structure amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) when he describes the Batlokoa polity that he was going to fight. Damane and Sanders (1974:120-121) translated Mangoaela's collection of the praise poems into English as per the following excerpt:

*Makatolle oa khoro li katiloe,*

[The one who dug open the passes that were closed.]

*Li bile li katiloe le ka Baroana ba Chere!*

[They were even closed with Gert's little Bushmen!]

-----

*Ba e-hloa ka khoroana tsa basali,*

[Most have climbed up by the passes of women]

*Ba na ba e-hloa ha ntšutšumetse*

[Most have climbed up by ntšutšumetse's pass]

There is a pun related to the word *khoro* (*kgoro*) as the word might also mention a traditional village or a related people in the form of the clan. The Batlokwa, therefore are a powerful chiefdom, as it has many *dikgoro* (villages) who even include immigrants such as the *Baroana ba Chere* (Gerts' Griquas).

Masopha must have been a powerful chief as he fought the Batlokwa and won. The word *kgoro* is therefore similar in meaning to the *kgoro* of the Batswana above. *Ha ntšutšumetse* seems to be indicative of a clan's chief's name amongst the Batlokwa, as it has a locative adverb *ha* -and *Ntšutšumetse* might be the name of the chief of the village. Today, many names of such villages are named after a chief e.g. *Tshwane* (Pretoria), *Ha Matela* and *Ha Tšiu* (in Lesotho) where the people are either a clan community that was captured by a senior chief of a polity or came later as immigrants and are now part of the senior chief's polity. Monnig (1967) and Pitje (1950) observe a similar community structure amongst the Bapedi. Tshwane's people are therefore part of the Bapedi polity.

Pitje (1950) mentions that various Sotho chiefdoms around Sekhukhune I supported him in governance. The thesis will discuss in depth that since the chiefdom is a collective of villages or clan communities, it is the second biggest structure of Sotho group governance. The thesis will show that a collective of chiefdoms in the same area form a group. The thesis will show that power, such as governance, welfare, the allocation of resources, fields and management of every day services to the people, is shared between every individual although they are amassed as a collective in a group. Every individual in the group is allocated resources and the right to protection in governance so that even those from the smallest communities feel comfortable and remain related. Consequently they remain faithful (owe allegiance) to the bigger structure.

The literature considers that the chiefdoms that make up the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) respectively are community collectives that are unique to each group (Monnig 1967, Breutz 1991 and Ellenberger 1997). However, the thesis will show that the Sotho groups

have a similar traditional structure and that their similar Sotho collectives have the same origin and outlook. The thesis will be following Smith's (1991:94) view where he mentions that even if people are divorced from associating with each other due to boundaries, they still feel that they are attached to their past.

Nhlekisana (2014), in a paper entitled *Batlokwa Culture Day: A Celebration of Cultural identity and Pride in Botswana* mentions that the Batlokwa polity in Botswana accepted the members of the Batlokwa clan from Lesotho as part of their polity during the 1970 political upheavals in Lesotho. Khaketla (1972) in *Lesotho 1970: An African Coup under a Microscope* says that the Basotho Congress Party (BCP) won the elections of 1966 but that the Basotho National party (BNP), who had been in power, nullified the election. This caused quarrels amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) that led to bloodshed and a state of emergency. As a result, some Basotho (Southern Sotho) nationalities decided to flee to Botswana and South Africa. (See Khaketla 1972).

The situation that Nhlekisana (2014) explains among the Batlokoa/ Batlokwa is similar to that of the narrative that Moshoeshe I decided to fasten the different lineages together to develop one nation. Moshoeshe I married five daughters of Hlalele. Moletsane was their custodian as they were his aunts, through marriage was bound to help and partner with Moshoeshe in his chieftainship. Ellenberger (1997) says the Barolong also asked for a place to stay from Moshoeshe I and Moshoeshe I gave them Thaba Nchu in the Free State. Moshoeshe also fought 'Manthatisi of the Batlokoa and Sekonyela presented himself and his community to Moshoeshe as part of Moshoeshe's chiefdom. Moshoeshe used marriage, armed forces and had communities voluntarily joining his chiefdom or polity like the Barolong. The thesis seeks to show that the Sotho chiefdoms use similar means of building themselves through war, marriage and volunteers in order to make a strong governance.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The chapter concludes that there are scholars who share common ground regarding the Sotho people. The arguments of these scholars were discussed in order to find out the cultural, social and political similarity of the Sotho as a people. The above discussion shows that there are

scholars who shed light on the cultural similarity of Sotho groups. These scholars point out that the Sotho are similar because their languages are variations from one origin. They have a shared corpus of words or language. Although each group can choose words at random, they choose similar ones to express the same idea. This makes their similar language their cultural representation. Their similar actions and co-ownership of practices stem from one original language.

Other scholars discuss the social similarity of the Sotho in depth. They mention that oral folklore shows similarities in the lives of the Sotho across the three groups e.g. when they perform their praise poems (*dithoko*) one is reminded that they have acquired *dithoko* from a common *lebollo* (initiation school) peculiar to the Sotho despite their divergence into different groups as the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi. The similar *lebollo* imparts Sotho expedition skills such as war techniques and nurturing of families. The Sotho also have a similar folklore such as proverbs, riddles and folktales that complement the initiation school, as they further impart practices of birth, growing up and burial.

Furthermore, some scholars discuss the political similarity of the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana as Sotho groups, agreeing that the groups have similar people from the former lineages of the Bafokeng and Bahurutse. These groups are a variation of each other as they have similar three hierarchical political units. Clans or extended families form a chiefdom and the chiefdom in one area forms a group. Welfare, power and management is shared amongst every individual in a group, as it is amassed as a collective. Each political unit oversees the maintenance of law, order, values, customs and norms that keep the Sotho together. A chiefdom or a clan does not have to stay in its former group if it is not satisfied. It is free to join another group or become independent due to the political dynamics of the status quo and contenting structure as a people. However, even when the Sotho communities are divorced from their former territory or collective, they still feel attached to it. Hence, they experience nostalgia in performing similar practices of governance.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **AN OUTLINE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

To understand the cultural, social and political similarities of the Bafokeng, Bakuena and the Bataung lineages amongst the Sotho, the thesis positions itself within the theory of ethnicity since its quest of knowledge is about identity formation. Ferris and Stein (2012) define ethnicity as a group of people with the same origin, culture and nationality, who form a society.

Smith (1991) and Gellner (1983) have widely researched the theory of ethnicity as it defines the cultural, social and political dimensions of a people. Smith's view of ethnicity is best captured by Darvill (2008:148) who notes that "ethnicity is the ascription, or claim, to belong to a particular cultural group on the basis of genetics, language, or other cultural manifestations." In other words, ethnicity is when someone belongs to a specific cultural collection of people with the same cultural representations e.g. languages and values.

Gellner's view of ethnicity is opposite to Smith as it maintains that ethnicity is socially constructed due to "lived experiences and circumstances of people beyond genetic relations". A person chooses to belong to a particular culture and associates with people who practice this culture. The thesis does not see ethnicity as a pre-conditioned natural state, as it is amenable to change due to circumstances.

Since this thesis would like to engage the Sotho groups of Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) through their similar Bafokeng, Bakuena and Bataung lineages, the study will use both Smith and Gellner's views of ethnicity to explain the similarity of the Sotho. In view of the fact that both Smith and Gellner's theories discuss culture in relation to nationality, the thesis will tap into them, as it is trying to understand whether Sotho groups are one.

The outline will begin by defining Smith's views of the theory of ethnicity and later discuss Gellner's outlook of ethnicity.

### **3.2 Smith's theory of ethnicity in the explanation of the Sotho**

According to Smith (1991:23), it is important to bring the same people from a similar ancestry together to make them aware of the community's membership e.g. people from the same ancestor form a lineage as a kind of collective. Others see them as being aware of their identity although sometimes, according to Smith (1991:23), they are "long divorced from their homeland". Smith (1991:23) says that this happens through "an intense nostalgia and spiritual attachment", i.e. the original identity always remains in a particular manifestation and appearance.

The Sotho have styled themselves into different versions of themselves, e.g. the Bafokeng, Bataung and Bakuena have the same lineages and can be seen as models of the Sotho, not as a different people. Chaiklin (1997:255-256) describes the above situation as "keeping the same lineages across the groups to make a society as a homogenous population". Therefore, the three groups of Sotho are still Sotho.

People of the same origin through genes (same lineages of the Sotho) have a sense of attachment to one another (Howuker & Hollington, 2007:331). The traditional identity of the people does not die, according to Smith's outlook with regard to the theory of ethnicity, as it can be demonstrated today i.e. it remains present.

Smith's theory of ethnicity is that the dependent-derived cultures mix with the existing cultures amongst the people and adapt to contemporary times. According to Huntington (2002:21):

The most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political or economic, customs and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations and at the broadest levels, civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity. We know who we are only when we know who we are not.



In other words, the institutionalization of the Sotho into Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) does not precede their original identity as Sotho. Contemporarily, their original identity transcends their groupings, as they identify themselves with their cultural group and civilization, among others. The original identity goes beyond the newly derived identity and foregrounds the quality of continuity depicted by Smith. Smith's perspective argues that although the same people define their identity through physical boundaries, they share the same values and other cultural traits.

Smith (1991:94) argues that even if the people are divorced from associating with each other due to boundaries, as in the above situation, "they feel attachment to their original name, culture and specific territory". They are always socialising across boundaries because of their cultural homogeneity in the region. When Levine (1999:166) talks about the same people not forgetting their relatedness, he says that ethnicity classifies people "according to their origins ... a great deal of cultural and symbolic content accretes to these classifications". As a result, their symbolic content portrayed by culture is maintained and developed. They consider themselves still related and share the same territory, although the legislature of the modern bounded countries demands the opposite of their original situation.

Ndhlovu (2013:19-20) agrees that since the original culture remains in the region where the boundaries were drawn to create different states, crossborder culture develops. The aspects of similar original culture across the borders become the means to manage life daily in crossborder population of similar people. This particular situation although real is little documented and becomes peripheral officially, although it is used to survive in everyday life. The situation becomes the official versus the real history.

Human beings maintain awareness of self-continuity and personal identity in time through the recall of past experiences that are identified with the self-image. (Hallowell, 1955:94)

The indication is that the Sotho disregard borders and persist in practicing their culture even when they are no longer grouped together, i.e. they practice self-determination.

The agency of cross-border communities appropriates the state of boundaries to enhance among others social, cultural and political opportunities. These are forms of social networking which form a solid foundation of inclusiveness of a society. (Ndhlovu, 2013:23)

Isaksil (2002:3) concurs with Ndlovu (2013), Guma (2001) and Hallowell (1955) that “a named human population has a myth of common ancestry, shared memoirs and cultural elements that link them with an historic territory”. This means that people who practice original culture everyday continue with it despite the boundaries. There are similarities of groups of people that have long separated into groups.

The organisation of the Sotho, as opposed to their leadership or the state's definition, describes them in universal terms. According to Smith's theory of ethnicity, the Sotho come from the same origin. There is an "intraSotho" i.e. historical ties situated or occurring within the Sotho groups where the Sotho are free from the boundaries of being called Bapedi, Basotho (Southern Sotho) or Batswana. Looking at the Sotho in terms of their organisation helps to define them as being similar, debunking their categorisation as Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi, i.e. when looking at the entire picture of the identity of the Sotho, one is able to understand what Sotho concepts and relationships they share.

The historical experiences of the Sotho become important in defining their similarity. A further example of the manifestation of their similarity is a reconstruction of historical culture and the construction of new culture across borders or other means of divorcing one people from their original groups. According to Nagel (1998: 251-252),

Cultural reconstruction techniques include revivals and restorations of historical cultural practices and institutions. Furthermore, cultural revivals and restorations occur when lost or forgotten cultural forms or practices are uncovered and reintroduced, or when lapsed or occasional cultural forms or

practices are refurbished and reintegrated into contemporary culture.

Each group of the Sotho is subsumed in the Sotho e.g. the genetic relations of the lineages. Smith (1991:94) and Brown (1998:6-8) explain that people who are genetically related share similar customs and values and speak similar languages. Smith's view explains what informs the Sotho heritage as a people i.e. to understand their policies, invincibility and their similar realised dreams in order to frame a vision of identity that helps to redefine the Sotho. This translates from the groups to the entire Sotho identity and vice versa. A Sotho group is connected even when it is in diaspora because of the shared heritage vision.

When one follows the lineages of the Sotho, such as the Bataung, Bafokeng and Bakwena, one finds them scattered among all the Sotho groups (c.f. Ellenberger, 1997). If you look at the similarity of the lineages across the Sotho groups, the reality is that there is neither Pedi, Southern Sotho (Mosotho) or Tswana. The term Sotho, which is its original form, is "Basotho" and encompasses every Sotho.

Smith's outlook on ethnicity accommodates modernisation in culture to build on previous knowledge; it is a product of the continuation of culture. If the history before modernisation were ruled out, what would the Sotho be? Every Sotho group has a legacy from the shared heritage and history of being a Sotho.

Smith's theory of ethnicity sees the Sotho as gathering rather than separating, i.e. being authentic to the Sotho, reflecting similar values, genes, region and culture, among others, other than appropriating skills of how they can regroup themselves.

An element of continuation exists when observing the groups of the Sotho beyond their separate ways to find out what they are like as a people who are comparable with each other. Another dimension of a continuation is to learn the similarities between the three Basotho groups by going beyond their boundaries and understanding their lineages from the past until today. One learns from the past and then goes on to understand a fuller picture of the likeness of the Sotho

groups. Shared lineages of the Sotho indicate the same vision and can be utilised to understand whether Sotho groups have a similar culture.

The shared heritage indicates that Sotho groups are similar nations or people. It provides a critical discursive site of the Sotho as a collective in reimagining themselves in order to survive as a people. Smith's theory redefines the relationship of the Sotho and validates the knowledge production, values and wellbeing of the Sotho identity. The thesis seeks to reclaim the characteristics that make up the Sotho and how they are expressed in their daily lives.

### **3.3 Gellner's theory of ethnicity in the explanation of the Sotho**

The following explanation of Gellner's theory of ethnicity shows that the issue of separation amongst the same people exists because of political desires, either ancient or modern.

The Sotho people, at a glance, seem to be separate nationalities i.e. Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi. Thus, primarily the Southern Sotho are associated with Lesotho; the Batswana with Botswana; and Bapedi with South Africa residing mostly in the Northern Province of Limpopo. National and hence political boundaries seem to be the defining factors of these identities. In effect, elites form these sub-groups (Sokolovski, 1996:190). Individuals from senior families of importance in the Sotho lineages, such as the Bafokeng, Bakwena and Bataung, could depart with their followers from their original communities and form other Sotho communities. This happened if the community became too large or they did not like their brother or father's leadership mostly due to allocation of resources with regard to leadership style and material wealth. The Sotho groups consequently became the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi nationalities.

Ethnicity is created in the dynamics of elite competition within the boundaries determined by political and economic realities and ethnic groups are to be seen as a product of political myths, created and manipulated by culture elites in their pursuits of advantages of power. (Sokolovski, 1996:190)

The Sotho groups end up as identities independent from each other and evolve into nationalities living in different political states.

Gellner (1983:48) notes that "nationalism is a new form of social organisation, that is based on deeply internalised ... dependent cultures each protected by its own state". Gellner's views of a nation are based on rational choices consciously made by human beings. The Bakuena, Bafokeng and Bataung lineages form new interrelationships of people who look at themselves as different from each other when they are in the groups of Southern Sotho (Basotho (Southern Sotho)), Batswana and Bapedi, although they are related and share a fundamental ethnic group.

According to the modernist theory, it is acceptable for a person to form a relationship with people they like and discontinue the traditional one, hence the ability for the Sotho to form the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana groups. When describing this behaviour of the Basotho, the modernist theory mentions that human beings are responsible for social and political groups that emerge. Adopting a new culture or creating new cultural aspects that define the new collective have their roots in individual self-interest and choice i.e. the Sotho chose to create the three nationalities of the Bapedi, Southern Sotho and Batswana to pursue their political and social interests.

The modernist theory manifested in the surface composition of the Sotho where the same people of origin by blood would have had a choice and preference to go their separate ways and join others similar to them to form a group and embrace a new nationality altogether.

Chaiklin (1997:255-56) contends that nationalities that have mixed ethnic groups are considered multi-ethnic countries. They are a melting pot of a modern nation where harmony goes along with diversity. This kind of nationality exists when the ethnic nationality starts to accommodate other ethnic groups who share the same economy and have important characteristics, e.g. a shared modern culture. A typical example is the Republic of South Africa where the Sotho live with other ethnic groups such as the Ndebele, Xhosa and Zulu. For the formation of a multi-ethnic nationality to occur, there has to be assimilation of some nationalities or a large number of ethnic groups must join one another.

Modernists, such as Gellner (1983) and Sokolovski (1996), are tempted to say that when people live in diversity, the original identity of a person dies. In retrospect, the dependent cultures derived by the new collective of a society become their permanent culture and they discard their original culture.

A new invention of borders in southern Africa brought another dimension to the identity of the Sotho. Chiara Brambilla (in Ndhlovu, 2013:35) says that:

The border is seen as being not merely a line on the ground but, above all, manifestation of social practise and discourse. It is a medium and instrument of social control and the communication and construction of meanings and identities that are produced through it. This way it becomes part of collective identities, shared memories, constructing a base for social interaction.

At one level, Brambilla's (n.d) theory of modern boundaries can be equated to the modernism theory. The Sotho groups with their same lineages could disregard their relatedness and identify themselves with the different nationalities of Lesotho, Botswana and South Africa, disregarding both their groups and lineages in the context of modern boundaries. Barth (1969:38), one of the classical writers in ethnicity, says, "The elements of the present culture of [the] group have not sprung the particular set that constituted the group's culture at a previous time". This modernist perspective adds to the above discussion on deriving identity.

The official culture desires the original culture to disappear by disregarding its everyday happenings (Barth 1969, p.38). The modern theory of ethnicity demarcates the same people. Modernism describes the divergent nature of the Sotho people in the thesis by answering whether the Sotho are one people or not because it acknowledges the Sotho as separate groups. Modernism shows that although the Sotho are a similar people, they have since formed different groups, i.e. Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the debate between Smith and Gellner's theories seems to highlight whether the Basotho are one people. When Gellner and Smith's theories are pitted against each other in an explanation of the Basotho (Southern Sotho), they expose different dimensions that give an entire picture with regard to the identity of the Sotho. Smith's explanation of ethnicity is futuristic in that it is far sighted. The theory sees identity and culture as a continuum composed of the similarities between people that never die; their traditions and culture bind people of the same origin who are capable of renewing and extending themselves to accommodate change.

Gellner's theory complements Smith's theory. People have to break away from their blood relations and immediate culture in order to form an identity that is suitable to their aspirations and needs, e.g. their economy. Once outside that circle, there is no need to trace their original history. This becomes problematic with regard to aspects of the modern policies of going back to one's roots for the purposes of social advancement. Furthermore, it seems that the understanding of culture and identity articulates nationality. However, nationality would not determine ethnicity.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **INVESTIGATING THE CULTURAL SIMILARITY OF THE SOTHO**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to find out whether Sotho groups are one people by examining their culture. This is done by looking at the cultural similarities of Sotho groups, their form of language and similar customs that brought about the name "Basotho ". This chapter will also discuss the origin of the Sotho groups sharing of the myth of their fictitious place *Ntswanatsatsi* in the past where the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi say they originate. The similar naming of places and representation by lineages and clans, such as the Bafokeng, Bataung and Bakuena, that are similar across the Sotho groups, will also be examined.

The thesis will discuss that the Sotho have a similar language that indicates their origin. The form and content of their language is the same, the Sotho only differ in how they prefer to use it in different regions through accent, pronunciation and orthography (the way languages are written), their geographical environment, and people from other nationalities who affect the different regions of the Sotho. The Sotho also share the name "Basotho " either from the narrative perspective of colour or customs and values that relate to their clothing style; as a result, they show a similar origin.

The chapter will examine the Sotho myth or belief in *Ntswanatsatsi* to draw similarities among the Sotho groups. The chapter will also discuss similar names of Sotho places indicating a common outlook in their culture of naming. For example more than one place is called *Matloangtloang* and *Lehurutse* (the former Matloangtloang in Chief Moletsane's praise poems is located both in the present Swaziland and Mpumalanga and Matloangtloang (also called Odendaalsrus) in the Free State. It will also be shown that the Sotho groups are all represented by their similar lineages e.g. the Bafokeng, Bataung and Bakuena.

#### **4.2 Sotho language variety as a cultural aspect**

This section seeks to show that the Sesotho (Southern Sotho), Setswana and Sepedi languages have similarities i.e. the Sotho languages share similar words and sentence structure. What makes



the Sotho groups appear different is the way each group uses language. There are minor phonological differences such as accent and orthography, while they use the same collection of words and the roots of the words are the same. The discussion below will show that these differences are caused by external factors e.g. meeting new people like the Nguni tribes and missionaries.

The Setswana, Sesotho and Sepedi have similarities as they share collective words. *Tshela/tšela* is found across the languages of Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho; *Tjhela* is found in Sepedi and is written in the same way as *tjhela* in Setswana but pronounced *tšela* (tshela) as in Southern Sotho, *tšela* is written so and pronounced like the Sepedi in Sesotho (Southern Sotho). All these variations of a word with the same root mean to cross, e.g. as in crossing the road.

The above example illustrates the variation in Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho (Southern Sotho) is in terms of minor phonological differences such as accent and orthography, while they use the same collection of words and the same roots of the words.

During an interview with George Sebitloane (pers com 2012), a former teacher interested in the traditional affairs of the Barolong in Thaba Nchu and later a government official in the issues of governance in the Free State province, he had the following to say on the various use of words among the Sotho groups:

I am a Motswana, but when you ask me which Motswana I am, I will tell you that I am Mohurutse. If you ask me which totem I am, I will tell you that it is a monkey, I am *Motshweneng*. But when I talk to a person from Lesotho, I won't say I am Mohurutse, the person won't understand clearly. I will tell him, folk I am a *Motshweneng*, that is my totem.

The above example indicates that the Basotho (Southern Sotho) understand when the *Bahurutse* are called *Batshweneng* among them.

The *Bahurutse* amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) have adopted the name *Batshweneng* rather than calling themselves by their original name, *Bahurutse* that remains in usage amongst the Batswana. The groups have a tendency to promote a particular word as opposed to its counterpart in the three groups' collective vocabulary so that, for example, other words with a similar meaning seem archaic when used by other groups who seldom use the words today. For example the Basotho (Southern Sotho) refer to the Bahurutse as the Batshweneng, while the Batswana still refer to the Batshweneng as the Bahurutse.

Sometimes other words are added to the vocabulary of a group as they meet other communities who have a different culture. Because they have spread and have new neighbours, the current Sotho seems to have become varied amongst the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho).

Dr Mildred Wakumelo is a lecturer in the Department of African Languages at the University of Zambia. She is related to the Bafokeng ba ha Sebetwane in Zambia. She has also taught at the National University of Lesotho. Dr Wakumelo (pers com 2012) explains that the encounter of the Basotho with other nationalities in Zambia affected the Sesotho language but it had remained similar to the one used among the Southern Sotho today:

Are you aware what Lozi is actually? We consider Lozis in Zambia as a group, an offshoot of the Sotho group because of the historical background they have. I think what strikes me as a similarity is in terms of the language itself that the Lozis have maintained. Of course, as it is expected, the Lozis will have incorporated some words from the neighbouring Zambian languages. Just like Sesotho or Southern Sotho incorporating words from the neighbouring Zulu. It (Lozi) will have incorporated words from the neighbouring languages. But when you look at basic vocabulary, there are a lot of similarities.... You find that the name Lozi is the name of a river. So today the similarities are that of language, but the group changes [its name] in terms of social environment.

According to the above interview, the Lozi are another group that migrated to Zambia. They were originally the Basotho group, but have since incorporated terms from neighbouring communities to help describe their new experiences, e.g. the Basotho who went to stay in Zambia incorporated the name "Lozi" into their vocabulary and even discarded the name "Basotho " and called themselves the Barotse (the Lozis). The Basotho who remained in southern Africa have also incorporated vocabulary from their Zulu neighbours. The two Sotho group languages, although similar, have now diverged into the two Sotho languages, Selozi and Sesotho. A Sotho group would add new words when they meet new environments and the words no longer used in their environment recede in their memories.

The Basotho in Zambia are now referred to as the *Barotse* (Lozi) in Zambia because they settled near the river, not because they are no longer Basotho, even though it is known that they are Basotho. The Lozi have also enriched the vocabulary of their own language, now known as Lozi, by adding new words from the neighbouring Zambian communities. However, the identity of the people remains, as their language still has some resemblance to Sotho languages.

Dr Mildred Wakumelo (pers com 2012) indicates below that the Sotho begot another language variety when in a new environment; one of the Bafokeng Sotho chieftaincy called Sebetoane settled in Zambia, (c.f. Gill 2010: 66).

Eh, I think what strikes me as a similarity [of Lozi to Sotho] is in terms of the language, which the Lozis have maintained. Of course, as it is expected, the Lozis would have incorporated some words from the neighbouring languages. But when you look at basic vocabulary, there are a lot of similarities [to Sesotho].

The Basotho in the above quotation, incorporated words from the local languages where they settled to explain their new experience and later gave this new language of Sesotho the name Lozi. Nevertheless, the language has a basic vocabulary that is similar to that of Sesotho.

The Bafokeng and other Sotho lineages that followed them, leaving the Bahurutse (Batswana) in Botswana to the South, are now called the Basotho (Southern Sotho). They speak Sesotho in the area now called Lesotho and the Free State and have added new words and phonemes to their language when they met Zulu and Xhosa neighbours. Ellenberger (1997) asserts that the Nguni languages influenced the Sesotho.

Dr Leloba Molema (pers com 2012), from the African Literature Department at the University of Botswana, explains the above situation of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) incorporating words from the Nguni:

Probably they have a common origin, but we know *ka difaqane* (during the Difaqane War), historically *hore* (that) Moshoeshoe brought these groups together. Sesotho has got clicks which Setswana doesn't have, which Sepedi doesn't have. *Maqaqailana* (ankles), hee! he! *ho kgathala maqaqailana* (to have tired ankles), he! Eh, *le ho qhethella [qetella]* (and to complete). Our clicks are exclamatory, *mcencence*! (right?) *Mtsh!* Modimo, *mtsh!* Wa bona? Ha o tenehile o re *nx!* [when you feel offended you say *nx!*], probably from the Nguni speakers, from the Sarwa as well, yah *Barwa* as we call them. But they are mutually intelligible with Sesotho. It's probably a result of the majority of people that Moshoeshoe brought together, being Tswana-Sotho speakers. So Basotho (Southern Sotho) as a nation (meaning Basotho in Lesotho) is quite new.

Dr Leloba Molema exposes many situations of how the Sesotho language varies from that of the Batswana. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) did not have click sounds when they left the Batswana; they instead used the phonological (sound) item [tsh] as in *mtsh!* However, they have added the [x] sound, as in *nx!*, to show that they are offended as well as *mcencence*! The Basotho (Southern Sotho) nowadays call ankles *maqaqailana* where there is a [q] sound indicating the phonological sound [c] absent in Sotho language. These click sounds also show that the Basotho (Southern Sotho) must have met the Barwa (San) in the south, apart from the Nguni. There are

places that still reflect the San language such as Qoaling, Qomoqomong and Senqu among the Basotho (Southern Sotho).

The Basotho (Southern Sotho) moved from where they were with the Batswana to the Nguni and the Sarwa in the south. The Nguni also joined the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and lived among them when they were scattered by Chaka; this further influenced the Sesotho language. Clicks are indicative of the first encounter that the Nguni themselves had with the Sarwa (Barwa). While the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi share a collective of the words and rules of the Sotho language, they also meet other people who might influence how such a Sotho group uses language. There are new sounds and words now embodied in Sesotho as opposed to Sepedi and Setswana due to having Nguni, Masarwa or Barwa neighbours.

Giles and Johnson (1987:69) say when social categories are formed the group that leaves the original community settles somewhere else and develops a variety of language that is similar to its original language. The new group discards words that no longer work in the new environment. While it enriches itself with the adoption of some items from the neighbouring languages, e.g. sounds and words, it keeps the rules of grammar, sentence formation and the rest of the previous vocabulary that it finds indispensable. The result is a similar language, divergent from the previous one.

Dr Molema (pers com 2012) consequently sees language as a "marker of social category", i.e. where a language marks a group amongst the Sotho groups.

I guess linguistically you would say they [Sotho groups] were once the same people. That they have a common source, but then they scattered through migration or war .... palace intrigues, yah princesses trying to unseat one another... Do you know why I studied Sesotho literature? Because it is intelligible with Setswana, I didn't have to learn the language.

Since the Sotho groups' languages share a common source of language rules, words, sentence structure and collection of words, Sesotho is mutually intelligible with Setswana. Hence, Dr Molema, though a Motswana, was able to study Sesotho literature at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. She also analysed a Sesotho classic of Thomas Mofolo called *Chaka* for her PHD studies.<sup>16</sup>

Lacey (1998) says that this language has rules defined as sign systems, i.e. the words have to be formed and have to follow each other in a meaningful sentence. This also applies to the grammar of the three Sotho groups. Lacey (1998) adds that language is the "supporting structure", i.e. the foundation of the spoken language. One can infer the same language from the Sotho varieties, as they match the same rules. The Sotho share the same language that they express in wide-ranging varieties of Setswana, Sesotho (Southern Sotho) and Sepedi.

De Saussure (1986:9-10) gives a scientific description of language that explains why languages are similar. *Langue* (French, meaning "language") and *parole* (meaning "speaking") are linguistic terms. 'Langue encompasses the abstract, systematic rules and conventions of a signifying system; it is independent of and pre-exists individual users. Language involves the principles of language, without which no meaningful utterances, "parole" would be possible.'<sup>17</sup>

What De Saussure (1986:9-10) says is that there are rules of grammar in language that include how sounds should combine to form words and the collective of those words in a language. Furthermore, there is a similar system of how words should follow one another in a sentence no matter how one prefers to speak the language. *Parole* is how one prefers to speak the language, i.e. the dialects (varieties) of the Sotho language would never have come into being if there were no Sotho language.

Taylor (1997:97) agrees that "the structure of language is revealed through ... the *parole*", i.e. the resemblance to Sotho is represented through their similar language, which is dependent on the same language. They also cannot have these languages without a common language.

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<sup>16</sup> Dr L. S. Molema's Phd thesis is entitled *The Image of Christianity in Sesotho Literature: Thomas Mofolo and His Contemporaries*.

<sup>17</sup> Compare to <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/language> and *parole*.

The languages are so similar that Mr N.P. Thulo (pers com 2012), a lecturer teaching Sesotho at the African Languages Department at the University of the Free State, discussed how the Sotho groups on one language board in southern Africa wanted the Sotho languages to share the way they are written (orthography):

In the early [19]50's we were using Lesotho orthography .... All the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi [who] participated in the orthography were trying to find all the sounds found in Pedi, in Sesotho and in Setswana. They are similar, so there won't be any problem even if they speak like the Sotho speak Sesotho, they will still use their own language. But the Tswana dialects, Pedis will also use theirs. So I believe orthography was one of the most important things for them.

Mr Thulo mentions that in South Africa people were using the orthography that is still used in Lesotho. Weigall, et al. (1985:2) concurs with Mr Thulo in their *Report of the Conference of Sesotho Orthography* (1906).

The conference therefore decides to be content with arriving at an agreement on the orthography of Sesuto proper, which is spoken not only in Basutoland, but also in Griqualand East (Cape Colony) and a considerable portion of the Orange River Colony, and which is very extensively used in a large part of the Transvaal and also in a part of Natal.

The Basotho (Southern Sotho), as a group, cover Kimberly (previously Cape Colony), the Free State (previously Orange River Colony), Gauteng (previously Transvaal) and Natal and they used to have one official orthography according to the 1906 missionaries report.

Language specialists among the Bapedi, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana found that writing the Sotho language varieties in a similar orthography is possible, as the language is the same despite the way each group decides to speak it. Olivier (2009) mentions that a combined Sotho language committee, including Setswana, Sepedi and Sesotho, that was formed to deliberate issues of similar Sotho languages, also ended up producing the *Sotho Terminology and Orthography No.1* document in 1951. In fact, they found that it is a mistake to have different orthographies, as they do not represent the language correctly (c.f. Olivier, 2009). *The Report of the Conference on Sesuto Orthography* of 1906 shows the type of orthography that Lesotho uses and that Thulo mentions above.

Both the *Northern Sotho Terminology and Orthography No.2* (DoBE 1962a) and the *Southern Sotho Terminology and Orthography No.2* (DoBE 1962b) for Setswana and Sesotho quote Professor Cole, the author of the Setswana grammar textbooks. Other members included G.C. Engelbrecht, M.D. Mohapelo, H.D.S. Khati, Professor Ziervogel, A.M. Ramokgopa, E.S. Moloto, Professor Kgware and K.R. Pilane. The members reflect the different nationalities of the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi literate, and people with knowledge of the Sotho languages. They found that it is a mistake to have different orthographies, as they do not represent the language correctly.

*The Report of the Conference on Sesuto Orthography* of 1906 was republished in 1985 by the Morija Sesuto Book Depot. It shows that Lesotho remained with the old orthography of the missionaries. The authorities in the report were Father Cenez from the Catholic Church, Eduardo Jaccottet and N. Mpiti from the Evangelical Church, Canon Weigall of the Church of England and Mr C.M. Lebeta representing the *Naleli ea Lesotho* newspaper. Although there is a variation in the Sotho language orthography, the varieties of Sotho language remain mutually intelligible.

#### **4.3 Minor differences in Sotho varieties of language**

The above discussion shows that there are insignificant differences in the dialects of Sesotho and hence one can call them varieties of the Sotho language of Setswana, Sesotho and Sepedi. The groups only select a word that they prefer from the collection of the Sotho words and use it as a community. Although their preferences of a word are not the same, they choose words among the



synonyms, which causes a variation in the usage of Sotho words that have similar meaning across the groups.

Dr Jurie Le Roux is a lecturer in the Department of African languages at the University of South Africa. He specialises in Setswana. Dr Jurie Le Roux (pers com 12) had this to say in an interview:

When you look at the Bakuena in Botswana, the Bakuena in Lesotho and the Bakuena in Tlhabane near Rustenburg, there are differences in terms of language... I don't think you can call it language, but language usage which burns down to dialect. On the surface there might be differences [such as] *katiba/ kuane*, *setlhare/sefate*, that are only on the surface.

According to the above interview, the Basotho (Southern Sotho) prefer to use the Sotho word *katiba* (hat) and the Batswana and Bapedi choose the Sotho word *kuane* (hat). The Basotho (Southern Sotho) understand that *kuane* is a hat and sometimes use it to refer to a specific kind of a hat made from the skin of a cat or wild rabbit. The Batswana understand the word *katiba*, but prefer to use *kuane*. The Batswana use the word *setlhare* (tree), while the Basotho (Southern Sotho) use *sefate* (tree). The meaning of the word *setlhare* has remained in Sesotho to refer to a shrub that can be used for medical purposes. However, despite these differences, these three groups are able to understand each other's choice of words in the Sotho dialects and can share a conversation

Dr Le Roux (pers com 2012) says that the difference in the languages of the Sotho groups is based on usage, as seen in the example above. As a result, the difference in Sesotho, Setswana and Sepedi is on the surface as the words are similar in meaning. He says this shows that Sesotho languages are dialects, i.e. the languages of the Sotho groups are similar but differ in usage because the groups are no longer united. Each group has its own territory and has the opportunity to socialise on its own as a group. Nevertheless, the language or the original group of words is never entirely discarded amongst the groups.

The phonemic and phonetic view expands the above discussion by mentioning that people discard some words and adopt new ones when they meet new environments as they spread. This is how new words are accommodated according to the rules of Sotho grammar, i.e. improving on the language and feeling comfortable in owning up to the environment and new concepts.

Mr N.P. Thulo is a lecturer in the department of African languages at the University of the Free State. He specialises in Sesotho. During an interview, Mr. Thulo (pers com 2012) adds the following regarding the concept of Sotho varieties, including the Sepedi and Setswana:

Their languages are similar; I think they have the same orthography [quickly added] in the Republic [meaning Republic of South Africa]. Another thing is only when you listen to them speaking is where you find a little bit of difference in pronunciation of their language. For instance, Sesotho mostly uses an [h], but the Tswanas are using [x], *ho ja* [to eat], the Batswanas are saying *go ya/ go ja*. We [meaning Southern Sotho (contemporarily called Basotho)] say *ho ja*. The Pedis use *go* when they speak, they use the soft [g], *go* but they pronounce it *g'ho*. It's exactly where you find the difference there. When they write, they use *g*, but Basotho will use only *h*, *ho bona*, not *go bona*. And then the Bapedi would say *ho bona* when they speak and *go bona* when they write. And then they say *ho bona* when they say *go bona* when they write. But as they speak, there is Øg. *Ho sepela* (to go/walk), *ho sepela* [Sepedi] ~ *ho tsamaya* [Southern Sotho/ Sesotho], and when they say *ho sepela*, they use [h] when they write.

Author: You mention the orthography that is, eh especially in South Africa. Like you are excluding a particular part, which is not included in the orthography? Because now you were saying among the Batswana, Basotho and Bapedi, is similar especially in South Africa. Are you excluding any other group?

Thulo: No, no, no, no. In the early 50s [meaning 1950's] we were using Lesotho orthography in South Africa. Now that is another indication or a sign that the Basotho, the Freestate and the Basotho interacted. That is why we still had the orthography of Lesotho at that time. I remember I started school in 1957, exactly using exactly the Lesotho orthography. It changed later when the Republic of South Africa took over now and changed the orthography. All the Basotho, Batswana and Bapedi participated in this orthography. They changed that one used in Lesotho. They said we don't have Molimo [mɔlĩmo] as Molimo we have Modimo [mɔdĩmo], it must be a'd,' A, B, C, D.

The above excerpt of an interview session shows that different orthographies of a language can cause a variation of an existing language because langue, which is a shared material of language in the form of words and sounds in speech, is malleable and allows a person to do so, e.g. *Molimo* [mɔlĩmo] and *Molimo* [mɔdĩmo] (God), above.

Orthography also has a variation. The same sounds are represented in different alphabet compilation. It seems that it was not the intention of the Sotho to have two orthographies. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) initially had one orthography, both in Lesotho and South Africa, developed by the missionaries. This first orthography lacked the appropriate expertise of harmonising the language. When it was corrected, a new Sesotho orthography developed. South Africa adopted the new orthography and abandoned the old that is still used in Lesotho today, to differentiate itself from Lesotho. The Sesotho has now developed two orthographies.

Thulo (pers com 2012) says that the Sotho language is the same, i.e. the Sotho dialects share langue and refer to a phonological sound variation of a similar sound amongst the Sotho languages where approximation plays a part, e.g. [g] ~ [h] and [y] ~ [j] as in *ho* ~ *go* and *ja* ~ *ya*. *Ho ja* and *go ya* (to eat) both mean the same thing, the only difference is how it is written and pronounced. In a number of instances, the same word remains in use with the same meaning and is written the same across the three official dialects of the Sotho (Sepedi, Setswana and Southern Sotho (Sesotho), e.g. *bona* (see).

*Tsamaya* and *sepela* (to go or walk) are collectively Sotho words but the Southern Sotho choose to use *tsamaya* although they still know its equivalent *sepela* and still use *sepela* as it appears in the proverb *lekakanyatheli la monn'a mosepeli* (somebody passing by on a journey). The Bapedi prefer the word *sepela* (walk). The corrections that the Sotho language boards are currently doing are based on the past misunderstanding that it is essential to create an appropriate orthography for the language instead of compiling orthography according to one's preference.

Mojapelo (2015) discusses accomplishments of Reverend Dietrich Masher<sup>18</sup> as an insightful person with regard to his knowledge and experience with Setswana. Reverend Dietrich Masher has administered in Setswana for over 40 years since his arrival from Germany as a missionary in South Africa. He was a member to more than one organisation of language, especially African languages. He was a member of African Languages Association of Southern Africa (ALASA). Furthermore, he was a Lekgotla (Council) of Setswana Preservation in South Africa member. Reverend Masher won an award of Pan South African Language Board Multilingualism Award in 2009/2010 for his participation in the development of Setswana. He has also helped the University of Botswana with issues of language in the recent years.

During an interview, Reverend Dietrich Masher (pers com 2012) said the following about Sotho languages:

The Sotho languages before 1800 were what we call *linguistically, dialect continua*; it means many dialects belonging to one area, which are rather an old type of an African Language with seven vowel systems, not five vowel systems and other things. The main disruption of unity came through Difaqane, especially the conquering of Western Transvaal by Mozilikazi. (*The participant draws a sketch of a Transvaal map as an illustration.*) You see this is the Western Transvaal. Resistance against this occupation was building up in Lesotho (Thaba Bosiu). It was building up in

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<sup>18</sup>C.f. Mojapelo, M. 2015. "A Summary of Moruti Dietrich Masher's Accomplishments".

Sekhukhuniland, because Mosilikatse (Mozilikazi) had come up from the Eastern Transvaal (*the participant points at the modern Freestate and Lesotho*) into the Western Transvaal (*The participant points swiftly from the centre of the map to the area now called Botswana*). There was resistance here [at] Kuruman, by the London Missionary Society. What is today called Botswana. [For] these pods of resistance, they used missionaries, they used schooling. Sechele, this is a very important chief amongst the Tswana, he is a Mokwena. In 1847, Moffat (from Germany) had already translated the Bible. In the long run, Lesotho and Botswana translated theirs. In [the] Britz area, they call themselves Batswana. The name came together with [the] Bible translation.

The missionaries began developing the orthography of the Sotho dialects that were predominant in these areas and were preferred by the chieftaincy of the region amongst the Bapedi, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana. Each Sotho chief was very proud to have a missionary under his jurisdiction and gave him permission to write the Sotho language. What ensued were three different Sotho orthographies as the missionaries approximated their languages to the Sotho language i.e. used the same collection of words, the same meaning and the same grammatical rules.

Jaspal (2008) explains that a common language is at best a means of expression to explain a particular collective character of a group everywhere when the languages are mutually intelligible. Mr Thulo's emphatic "no, no, no, no" above (pers com 2012), denies the exclusion of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) from Lesotho from the Batswana or from the Bapedi and their fellow Basotho (Southern Sotho) in the Freestate. It shows that he regards the Sotho as one people who are able to plan how their language has to be represented e.g. in writing, where they are not prevented by circumstances.

The three groups regard Sotho dialects in the form of the Southern Sotho (Sesotho), Northern Sotho (Sepedi) and Setswana as a variation of one language. The threat of the same membership

of people in a major Sotho group is counteracted by a shared "self-aspect" as the Sotho share a social collective, e.g. De Saussure's (1986:9-10) *langue* where the Sotho share the underlying structure of language which is formed from a deep-rooted social collective. For instance, one participant (Dr Molema) could study Sesotho literature academically without learning Sesotho (Southern Sotho), although she is a Motswana.

Another example is the Southern Sotho orthography that has two versions. The interview shows that although the two orthographies of Southern Sotho might make the Basotho (Southern Sotho) from Lesotho and the Basotho (Southern Sotho) from South Africa seem different, the Sesotho semantics, which are the gist and the syntactic structure that makes Sesotho a common language for the Sotho, is still the same. According to one of the participants above in a discussion about orthography, wherever one goes internationally, the Southern Sotho remains Southern Sotho despite the differences brought about by the orthography, both past and present, which is now used by the divided territory to differentiate the Sesotho in Lesotho and the ones in South Africa. The South African State did not change this orthography; South Africa adopted the new version of the Southern Sotho orthography after all the Sotho language specialists developed it. Lesotho retained the old orthography, while the Sesotho writing developed it into two orthographies.

The issue of language shows self-determination amongst the Sotho according to the above interviews, e.g. contemporary Sothos long to have one standard orthography for all Sotho groups, including those in Lesotho and Botswana. The cross group Sotho language planners all said, "We don't have *Molimo* for *Modimo*", indicating the ownership of common language and questioning the sound [l] for the sound [d] in the Sotho language. Olivier (2009) mentions that a combined Sotho Language Committee made an input into the document *Sotho Terminology and Orthography NO.1* in 1951. The title of the document shows that the three groups on the Sotho committee corrected the orthography and discussed the similar vocabulary of the Sotho dialects of Setswana, Sepedi and Sesotho. While the result was a harmonised orthography that presented similar languages in writing, the languages did not succeed in becoming harmonised due to the prejudice of politics, such as the apartheid system.

Such similar languages, which are mutually understandable, are varieties of one language. The scientific explanation of language varieties, such as Setswana, Sesotho and Sepedi, is that they acquired further identities because of their interaction with other societies. Jaspal (2009:8) maintains that the underlying structure of such languages remains the same and transcends a dialect developing because of external influences. Hence, the variation of dialects expands from the major language corpus. The manifested forms of these factors are no longer a threat to changes in the social context, but are developments. The variation in the form of dialects becomes the sub-cultural aspect, i.e. Sesotho in the form of Southern Sotho, Sepedi and Setswana emanate from a major language and varieties are an aspect of a Sotho sub-culture.

The following proverbs found in Sepedi and Setswana are a testimony to the above explanation, as they are also found in Sesotho (Southern Sotho). Although they have a similar explanation, they are known by different names. The Batswana call proverbs *diane*, the Basotho (Southern Sotho) call proverbs *maele* and the Bapedi call them *dikao*. In her welcoming speech during the African Literature Conference held on 11 July 2012 at the University of Botswana, the head of the Department of African Literature used the Tswana proverb: *re inele diatla metsing*, literally meaning "put your hands in water for our sake" (forgive us). This proverb or idiomatic expression, often used in Southern Sotho (Sesotho), is also found in Sekese (2011, originally published in 1847). The only difference is that *diatla* (hands) is used in the Tswana proverb, which is also part of Sesotho vocabulary that refers to hands. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) use *matsoho* (hands) in the idiomatic expression as in *re inele matsoho metsing* with the similar literal meaning "put your hands in water for our sake" also meaning 'forgive us'.

The following proverbs are found among the Bapedi. The thesis finds that all these proverbs have their counterparts in Sesotho (c.f. Sekese, 2011, *Collection of Sesotho Proverbs*):

#### **Sepedi**

##### **(a) Bontši bo bolaea noga**

Literal meaning: multitudes kill a snake

Figurative meaning: many hands make light work

#### **Sesotho**

##### **= Letšoele le beta poho**

: Multitudes squash a bull

: Many hands make light work

##### **(b) Go raga lepai**

##### **= Ho raha lebota**

Literal meaning: to kick a blanket	: To kick a wall
Figurative meaning: to die	: To die

<b>(c) Go bina felo le tee</b>	<b>= Ho qapela pina seemeng</b>
Literal meaning: To dance around on one spot:	To lead a chorus of a song into the wilderness.
Figurative meaning: yo lack progress:	To lack progress.

<b>(d) Go kgopela sego sa meetse</b>	<b>=Ho kopa mohope wa metsi</b>
Literal meaning: to ask for a calabash of water:	To ask for a calabash of water
Figurative meaning: to propose marriage:	To propose marriage

The above proverbs and idioms are the special vocabulary that portrays the beliefs, customs and values of people, e.g. *go gopela sego sa metsi/ ho kopa mohope wa metsi* (to propose marriage) reflects the procedures in a marriage practice by the Sotho as they go to ask for a girl's hand in marriage. The girl is nicknamed a calabash of water (*sego sa metsi/ mohope wa metsi*) as she is precious like water and provides life and the continuation of the clan by begetting children. She will also look after the family in the household and see to issues such as drawing water from the well. The same proverb is found across the Sotho groups, which means they share beliefs, customs and values. A further illustration is *go raga thokolo* in Setswana similar to *go raga lepai* in Sepedi and *ho raha lebota* in Sesotho as illustrated above.

#### 4.4 The name Basotho

This section will discuss the origin of the collective name "Basotho" and how it is derived from the Sotho calling themselves *ba ba sootho* (those who are brown) forming the derivational noun, *Basotho*. The thesis will show that it was the innate feeling of the Sotho that they are brown, i.e. it was not transcribed from outside the group. The second way of looking at "Basotho" would be how the name emanates from cultural practices that are similar amongst the Sotho groups through the eyes of other nationalities. The Nguni description of the Sotho emanated from an external force, i.e. they looked at the Basotho from outside the group. The thesis will discuss that



the Nguni called the Sotho groups *Abashundu* (those who tie the knot while dressing) forming the name "Basotho" that led to the discovery of their representation as Sotho groups.

#### **4.4.1 Self-explanation of the Sotho people**

A certain narrative describes the Sotho by their complexion, i.e. *Ba sootho* (those with a brown complexion). Tšiu (2008:11) gives an account of how his informant, Professor Thapelo Selepe, argued that the name Basotho comes from the adjectival stem *sootho* (brown). The name "Basotho" would therefore be derived from their description as a collective people according to their colour. The prefix for one person according to colour would be *e mo sootho*, with a deletion method in sounds to form one word *Mosotho*. According to Manyeli and Machobane (2001:16-17), the essence of this description has been widely used to describe the Basotho ever since.

Francois Laydevant, a catholic priest, gives a more lucid version of the description of the Basotho in his *The Basuto* (n.d.):

Many of the authors claim that the Bantu race was born in the region of the great lakes. Under pressure of an unknown cause, they emigrated; some went west, others went south. While they were on the shores of the great lakes after the beginning of their slow migration towards the south, the ancient Basutos were in contact with strangers coming from the Red Sea or from the Persian Gulf and sailing down the East Africa Coast. Arab and Persian boats sailed southwards under the helping influence of the winds, they returned home after four to five months when the strangers from Egypt or Asia penetrated far into the interior in quest of ivory, gold and precious stones. The sharp eye of Abbe Brevil discovered, in various parts of South Africa, traces of these strangers and explorers in paintings [sic] of the Bushmen.

Francois Laydevant's explanation is that the Sotho are part of the Bantu who originate from the great lakes. Owing to certain circumstances, they migrated west to southern Africa.

Francois Laydevant's description resonates with Kriel (2010:46) who describes the origin of the Sotho through the Bafokeng lineage.

Breutz (1953:11-12; 1989:1-4) refers to the Bafokeng as a tribe who journeyed from a region around southern Sudan and settled in Southern Africa where their first destination was Botswana and spread further into Southern Africa between 1200 and 1400 AD. As a result Breutz (1953) also describes the Bafokeng as the oldest tribe of the Sotho. Kriel (2010:46) quotes Breutz (1953:11-12; 1989:1-4), adding that the Bafokeng left southern Sudan in two distinct groups and moved to Botswana. They then spread into South Africa. What Kriel (2010:46) omits to say is that the two ancient groups are mentioned by Ellenberger (1988:30-31) as the Bafokeng and Barolong, where the lineage of the Bahurutse amongst the Tswana originated. The result of intermarriage between the Barolong lineages and Bafokeng are the Sotho in southern Africa, not South Africa per say.

#### **4.4.2 Others explanation of Sotho**

The Sotho have a similar culture of dressing that gave them the name Basotho. Literature mentions that the name "Basotho" was perpetuated because people from Nguni stock jeered at the Highveld tribes of the Bafokeng, Bakuena and Bataung amongst others, calling them the *Abeshuntu* (those who tie the knot in their loincloth) translated into Sotho as *lefito*.

According to Gill (1997:44), (c.f. E Casalis *My Life in Basutoland*, London 1889):

The origin of the name "Basotho" probably derives from the Swazi people who thought Highveld men to be comical because of the way they tied their loincloths in a knot at the back, calling them Aba-shunto. Thus, the term Aba-shunto would apply to the present day Basotho [Southern Sotho], Batswana and Bapedi who are closely related. Moshoeshe, in order to find a common name for his disparate peoples, apparently turned this term of derision into one which was positive and unifying.

The discussion by these authors on the text-context theory is that a language item, in this case a name of a people Basotho, has to be studied in context. The Swazis observed the Sotho and called them Basotho which is a name adopted from Sotho similar way of dressing.

The Sotho lineages under the new kingdom of Moshoeshoe appropriated the name. Mokitimi (1991:5) argues, "At this stage the speaker mobilises all the relevant linguistics, paralinguistic and kinetic resources for the realisation of the linguistic item." In the application of the name *Basotho*, Moshoeshoe used his repertoire to enhance part of the lineages of the Sotho under his jurisdiction and motivated them to work together as a nation by recognising their shared identity and history.

When Moshoeshoe formed a larger community out of the predominantly different lineages of the Sotho, such as the Bafokeng, Bataung and Bakuena, he acknowledged their original encompassing name and officially called them the Basotho nation:

Moshoeshoe's nation began to be called the "Basotho" nation, his country "Lesotho" outshining that of all its (rivals) ... other chieftaincies of the Sotho, in particular Sekonyela of the Batlokoa. [The] Batlokoa were situated at Marabeng near modern day Ficksburg (Gill, 1997:14).

There seem to be other incidences where people are called by their heritage after they have amalgamated into a political unit as a nation, e.g. the Batswana. The Sotho lineages of the Botswana also believe that they come from Ntswanatsatsi. It seems when they develop a modern country, the Sothos do not want to discard their history. The research makes an analysis that all the Sotho lineages own the name Basotho, including the Batlokoa who also come from Ntswanatsatsi. According to Mahao (2011:06), the original Ntswanatsatsi of the Basotho is a place at the great lakes. Other Sotho lineages include the Batlokoa, Bakgatla and Baphuthi. According to Machobane and Manyeli (2001:05):

The name "Basotho" is a collective. It designates a sum of various African clans or totems. It was used colloquially in the nineteenth century after ... the migration of those clans from the immediate original place – Ntswanatsatsi—where the ancient Lehurutse had found [the] Bafokeng already settled.

Machobane and Manyeli (2001:05) regard the Basotho as the descendants of the Lehurutse and Bafokeng clans through intermarriage:

The children from this intermarriage developed into communities called clans such as Bafokeng, Batlokoa, Bakgatla, Baphuthi and Bakuena. Since there is seldom a clan by the name of Lehurutse, [the] Lehurutse clan can be said to have divided into [the] Batlokoa, Bakgatla, Baphuthi and Bakuena.

Moletsane calls the Barolong chief Mofurutse in his praise poems, (c.f. Mangoaela, 1997). Ellenberger (1988:14 & 31) mentions that the Bafokeng daughters were married into the families of Lehurutse and their sons developed communities that are nowadays called the clans of the Sotho. In this way, Manyeli and Machobane (2001:05) discuss the historical development of the people "Basotho".

Hammond-Tooke (1974: 73) says the Basotho stock are Bataung, Bakwena, Bahlakoana, Dihoja, Bafokeng, Makgolokwe, Batlokoa, Baphuthing, Basia and others. Moshoeshoe only promoted the history of the Basotho lineages as one people by officialising its name "Basotho" for the collection of lineages under his jurisdiction. The analysis of different Sotho lineages or clans owning a name is verified by Ellenberger (1912:34) and Tšiu's (2008:11) explanation of the Sotho through the name "Basotho". The Swazis laughed at the people living in the Highveld of southern Africa calling them *Abashuntu* (those who tie the knot) because of the way they dressed, i.e. having an end of girded soft leather cloth pass between their legs and fastening the other two ends of the same cloth behind them. The Bapedi acknowledged this name with pride.

Since the Swazis were closer to the Pedi, they would tell the Bapedi that their *Mocha* made of jackal's or rock-rabbit skin was a better clothing.

The women wear a very soft skirt made of tanned cow skin. This skirt is longer at the back and shorter in front in order to reveal a *thithana* (closely-knit skirt) made of special reed tussles. The similar skirt is called *motlokolo* in Setswana. This community of people also have a traditional garment made of very soft tanned skin from the cow's offal (*tsheya* [Sesotho] ~ *tshega* [Setswana]) for the men, which is also secured around the waist by tying a knot.

Manyeli and Machobane (2001:05) associate the name Basotho with the dispersion of the Sotho. According to them, "the recent dispersion of Lehurutse descendants and the subsequent regrouping of various clans by Moshoeshoe" produced the Basotho nation. However, the discussions in this chapter show there are other chieftaincy of the Sotho who managed to do the same thing. This resulted into the Sotho groups of Bapedi and Batswana, in addition to that of the Basotho group.

The approximated sounds in the Sotho language brought about the name *Basotho*. The name "Basotho" emanates from the action of tying a knot with the two ends of a triangular designed blanket when a Sotho woman is carrying a baby on her back (c.f. Ellenberger 1997 and Tšiu 2008). This kind of a knot when tying the baby on one's back is called *lesoto*, bringing into the fore the Basotho tendency of tying a knot when they dress. The people who look at the Basotho see them as those who tie the knot, hence the Nguni calling the Sotho *Abeshundu*.

The baby's blanket is made from the tanned skin of an animal. Many Sotho still use this technique to carry babies today. The act of carrying a baby like this has also produced the famous *dipina tsa Mokopu* song among the southern Sotho:

*Kgale kgale re sa le Bothabotho*

*Kholu a pepa Moshoeshoe*

*A mo tlama ka thari a mo pepa*

*Kholu a pepa Moshoeshoe*

[Long long ago while we were still in Bothabotho  
Kholu put Moshoeshoe on her back  
He fasten him with *thari* around her waist  
Kholu put Moshoeshoe on her back]

This famous Basotho (Southern Sotho) girls' song tells how Kholu, a Bafokeng princess and mother of King Moshoeshoe 1 of the Bakuena who was the founder of modern Lesotho, carried her son on her back with the traditional *thari* (baby-carrying blanket). A further political analysis of the song asks what kind of *thari* was this since Moshoeshoe was not a prince paternally but was made king of a Sotho kingdom nevertheless.

The women forget that there is another princess of the Bafokeng who came from a younger family than that of Kholu, the mother of the Bapedi chief, which is another Sotho kingdom (Ellenberger, 1988:31; 1997:20). These two incidences of bringing the same people, of the same lineages together to form a community can be regarded as a cultural practice amongst the Sotho. In analysis, the Bafokeng lineage amongst the Sotho used to help individuals to attain the chieftaincy if such a person showed leadership qualities.

The act of helping a person is also resonated in the following Sotho proverb, *ho pepa ka thari ea tshepe* (to carry on the back with a reindeer skin triangular blanket) which literally means to be trustworthy towards someone who has put her faith in you. The act of carrying someone on one's back reveals a relationship between two people. The Sotho also call each other *bana ba thari ea tshepe* (related children who are carried on the back through the similar custom of *thari*). Therefore, the act of fastening a knot might mean people who are close together as a community of related people, who work together and trust each other.

The name "Lesotho" then means that the name "Basotho" emanates from the root (-Sotho). To indicate a person, the prefix *Mo-* was added to the root *-sotho*. The plural of the people of this collective of people living in the Highveld became Basotho. The issue of tying the knot seems to run as a thread through the incidence of dressing as an adult and when taking care of a Sotho

baby. This analysis shows that the name "Basotho" is a product of all the Sotho groups or the entire Sotho people and asserts their cultural identity. Therefore, they are identified as a people who tie the knot because of their customs and values.

Mr Thulo (pers com 2012) argues that the Sotho groups' languages are one language, Sesotho, which shows their culture:

Tswana, Sothos [Southern Sotho] and Pedis are exactly the same because they fall under the name Sesotho because they are sister languages and they are all called in one name, the Basotho group.

The prefix *le-* (depicting land) forms the pronoun Lesotho. The purpose of the name is to relive the past and conjure the shared culture of the Sotho. It discounts boundaries to connect people through their same identity and culture.

The old structures, of the Sotho could be joined with the new ones and the same people across the borders could appropriate their physical boundaries (Ndlovu, 2013:23). By insisting on calling themselves Basotho, the Moshoeshe Kingdom feels that they form part of the bigger Sotho national identity and culture. The official naming of the Southern Sotho as Basotho is part of heritage protection, "we call ourselves [a] Basotho as Southern Sotho community, lest we forget that we are Basotho [Sotho]" (Levine, 1999:165-180). Levine adds that cultural practices transcend time and place through symbols identifying a people as belonging to a particular ethnic group.

While the Sotho agreed to call themselves *Abeshundu* or Basotho, the missionaries deleted the prefix *Ba-* and named them the Sotho. Smith (1996:10, originally published in 1939) mentions that:

The spelling of African names has always presented difficulties. Temporarily, at least, the difficulties are increased today since the

reformers have taken the matter in hand. The prefixes characteristic of Bantu nouns the *Ba-* in *Ba-suto*, the *Se-* in *Se-suto* ... it is now generally agreed among experts, should be dropped when writing English. We should write Sutos instead of Basuto and Suto instead of Sesuto when referring to language.

While it seems that there was resistance among the missionary conformists and European experts, particularly the English, "Sotho" is nevertheless used for the collective of the people and their language is called Sotho. The name Basotho is now officially reserved for the kingdom of Moshoeshoe and the entire Southern Sotho, and their language is called Sesotho, the original name of the entire Sotho people. Because of the missionaries, there are now two terms for the Basotho people, the "official" versus the real history of the people as the majority of the interviews show that the entire people are Basotho, with their language and culture called Sesotho.

Smith's view is that "the primordial theory says that a manifestation and appearance of the original identity remains when one creates versions of the same form". The Sotho therefore would be recognised as the same people due to the above arguments about their name. This kind of persistence to assert one's identity is called "self-determination".

#### **4.5 Ntswanatsatsi as the myth of the Sotho**

This section will look at a Sotho common place known as *Ntswanatsatsi~Ntsoanatsatsi* (coming from the east) that has turned out to be their myth. The Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi are similar in that they have a common myth about their origin. All the Sotho groups believe that they originally come from Ntswanatsatsi (the rising sun), (C.f. Couzens 2003:46-47 and Machobane and Manyeli 2001:14).

A Sotho legend tells how the Sotho sprang from the ground holding spears and walked with their animals in the original Ntswanatsatsi region (Machobane & Manyeli, 2001:14-15). The Sotho have a common land in the historical past, and the legend indicates that this original land of the Sotho groups is fictitious as no one can be born an adult where he is able to look after animals



and fight. Another legend is that Ntswanatsatsi is a place of reeds and that it is from here that the Sotho emerged (Bereng, 2010a). Bereng adds that when children are born, the Sotho people erect a reed that faces east to remind themselves that they originate from Ntswanatsatsi.

The Sotho name the places of their contemporary residences "Ntswanatsatsi" to honour the original Ntswanatsatsi. Ellenberger (1997) and Machobane and Manyeli (2001:15) locate Ntswanatsatsi as the Tafelkop plateau between Vrede and Frankfort in the Free State. Another Ntswanatsatsi is found along the Vaal River in the Northern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga). The original Ntswanatsatsi is traced further north, kilometres away from where the Bantu people originated. Although the place remains a myth, it is a narrative common amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi that the place is in Central Africa where the great lakes are found. Ntswanatsatsi is a sacred name among the three groups, as it indicates their similar origin.

On the South African radio programme "African Connections", a diplomat mentioned that as Mpumalanga is part of Swaziland, the African Union is faced with difficulties. "Mpumalanga" translated into Sotho is *Ntswanatsatsi*. The South African government appropriated the name after 1994.

#### **4.6 Duplication of place names by the Sotho groups**

The Sotho tend to repeat the names of places and their places of origin as they spread, which shows that they have similar customs, e.g. naming practices. Mangoela (1997) in the Moletsane praise poems presents the narrative that a Zulu clan confiscated the Bataung fortresses that covered Swaziland and Mpumalanga during the Difaqane War.

In Moletsane's praise poems (collected by Mangoela, 1997) he describes a fight alongside chief Moshoeshe 1 from a fortress at Mekwatleng (Modderpoort). Moletsane recalls his forbears living at Lehurutse, the region that covers modern Botswana and the Northwest province. When Moshoeshe 1 summons his help to fight the Barolong chieftaincy around Thaba-Nchu, he says he is not very happy about Moshoeshe's diplomacy because Moshoeshe makes him fight his relations (Tšame is one of his forbears from Lehurutse):

Tšhame.....

Eena morena ha a mo rate o mo hloile,

O ne a bone ha a mo laela Barolong.

(Tšhame (Moletsane) ...

[Tšhame .....

The great chief does not like him,

He realised when he commanded that he should fight Barolong

(Tšhame (Moletsane))....]

Moshoeshe knows that the chief does not like him because he commanded him to fight the Barolong even though he abhors the fact that Mofurutsi is stingy and greedy and does not have a lot of support.

Moletsane recalls his birthplace, Matloangtloang, as being the original homestead of Chief Hlalele of the Bataung, his great grandfather. Matloangtloang, the name given by the Sotho because of its fast growing vegetation, good rainfall and warmth, is the present Swaziland and Mpumalanga. The Bataung fought here during the Difaqane War, and the Swazis ended up occupying the land. In a conversation with one of the Bapedi and a Swazi (10 June 2012), the author established that the Bataung are called the *Badau* in this area.

The name "Lehurutse" has often been repeated. After boundaries were drawn between modern Botswana and South Africa, Lehurutse kept its indigenous name synonymous with the North West and Lehurutse in the Free State is synonymous with Odendaalsrus. These original names have receded as the location names while the modern Western names occupy the urban areas.

Moletsane also gives other names that are similar among the Sotho in his praise poems about the Bataung (Mangoela, 1997). He refers to his senior chiefs, who are his great grandfathers whom he left in Lehurutse (North West) while he resides in the Free State and has established his chieftaincy. The narrative mentions that Hlalele's chieftaincy includes Mpumalanga and

Swaziland (Matloangtloang) as the historical land of the Bataung. "Matloangtloang" is also found in the Free State.

\*Tiisetso Khaba<sup>19</sup>(2013) mentions another place regarding the Sotho tradition of presenting themselves with similar names in other areas.

A person called Napo has begotten Molemo, Molemo is a Mokwena. The old Molemo died at a place called Tebang. It was at his son's place Motebang. This place is found in the very place of South Africa. It is not the Free State it is further beyond the Vaal. It is a place quite far, the place of Tebang.

Molemo had a son who became a chief of the Bakwena people in a place beyond Vaal where the Batswana are staying. His place was named Tebang. There is also Tebang village in the district of Mokhotlong. It is the homestead of chief Mathealira Seeiso of the Bakuena. Tebang in Mokhotlong might be the naming of the place to remind the Bakuena that their origin is their great grand father Molemo who is the son of Napo. It is the keeping of history in a name.

#### **4.7 Similar totems representing Sotho identity**

This section discusses the similar Sotho totems as their cultural representation. To determine whether people are of the same origin, one has to look at the similarity of their totems and clans (Manyeli & Machobane, 2001:106-107).

This thesis differentiates between a clan and a lineage in that the lineage is the original or bigger community that develops into more than one community. The smaller communities that develop from the original or bigger communities are called clans. All the Sotho groups are similar in that they share a narrative that they come from the Bahurutse and the Bafokeng. Matšela and

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<sup>19</sup> \*Tiisetso Khaba is not his real name. He is a knowledgeable person in Sesotho issues who attended an initiation school.

Moletsane (2006) collected clans and lineages that developed from their original Bahurutse and Bafokeng lineages in 'Mantlatilane. Lineages and clans are seen as markers of sub-cultural identity amongst the Sotho with regard to how a lineage is represented in the three groups, e.g. the Bafokeng are represented in the three groups (Ellenberger, 1988:11).

The thesis regards the smallest communities in numbers of people and passage of time, as clans. The lineages are the oldest or larger communities where sub-communities ensued. The Sotho are similar in that they originate from the Bafokeng and Bahurutse who are the oldest lineages amongst the Sotho (Damane, 1993:07). These two lineages from the Bafokeng or Bahurutse formed their own sub-communities that are regarded as clans.

The Basotho (Southern Sotho) identify themselves with the above and other Sotho clans mentioned below (Phafoli & Zulu, 2014:183). When a community is formed amongst the Sotho, it finds a new totem with which to identify itself, i.e. an animal that they turn into their sacred symbol. These animals are respected and the community they represent imitate their habits. Some symbols are objects, although such totems are rare compared to those of animals, e.g. the Maphuthing, Barolong and Makgwakgwa venerate stone, iron and pumpkins, respectively; the Bataung associate themselves with a lion; the Batlokoa venerate a wildcat; and the Bafokeng and the Bakoena associate themselves with a hare and a crocodile, respectively. The thesis observes that the other two groups, i.e. the Bapedi and Batswana, also have a belief in totems similar to those of the Basotho (Southern Sotho).

Damane (1993:07) observes the formation of a local Sotho community as follows:

*Joale ho Barolong ho tsoile Bahurutse, 'me ho bona ha tsoa  
Bakoena, Basiea, Batlokoa, Bataung, Bapeli le ba bang....  
Bafokeng ke bona ba baholo har'a liboko tsohle tsa Basotho le  
Batsoana. Ke seboko sa khale haholo 'me ba fumanoa hohle  
Lesotho le Botsoana.*

[Barolong have begotten Bahurutse, and the Bahurutse begot Bakoena, Basia, Batlokoa, Bataung, Bapeli and others ... Bafokeng are the oldest lineage amongst all the Sotho lineages of the Basotho and Batsoana. It is a lineage from antiquity and they are found all over Lesotho and Botsoana.]

According to the quotation above, the Barolong is a community or clan that shares a totem from the Bahurutse lineage. The Bakoena, Bapedi, Bataung, Batlokoa came from the Barolong. According to Damane (1993:07), Bafokeng is also an old lineage like that of the Bahurutse and its communities are found across the groups of Sotho. Kriel (2010: 47) says the Bafokeng totem is a genealogical icon of all the Sotho that she terms the "Sotho/Tswana" people. The later Barolong, Bakoena, Bapedi, Bataung and Batlokoa clans from the Bahurutse are also found across the Sotho groups. 'Mathulare, the princess of the Bafokeng, was married to Tabane of the Bakgatla, which is a clan ensuing from the Barolong. Her sons established numerous clans. These clans are similar as they come from the same couple.

The Bakgatla, also descendants of Mohurutse, left Sefatlhane (Zeerust) and settled on the Magaliesburg in the vicinity of a tribe of Bafokeng, known as Sebolela-a-kuena. From the marriage of their chief, Tabane, with 'Mathulare, a daughter of these Bafokeng, there issued five great tribes, the Bapedi, the Makhokokoe, the Maphuthing, the Basia, and the Batlokoa. This took place near where the town of Pretoria now stands. (Ellenberger, 1997:20).

The Bakgatla clan are said to be the descendants of Mohurutse of the Bahurutse lineage. They left their homeland, Sefatlhane, and settled near the Bafokeng ba Sebolela Kuena in the Magaliesburg (*Thabeng ya Mohale*). The five Bapedi, Makgolokoe, Basia, Maphuthing and Batlokoa clans arose from the marriage between 'Mathulare and Tabane. Marriage between individuals seems to promote a population when it divides due to management issues of chieftaincy creating a similar people, hence the similar representation of Sotho through similar totems across the three Sotho groups.

The similar totems of the Sotho groups provide a coherent identity because they are a similar people. The totem is also a name and historical narrative in the form of a praise poem, e.g.:

***MOSIA MOTOBATSI***

*Motho oa 'Mantšang –thebe- li- ome,*

*Li se 'na li omela mokhoabo tlung,*

*Li omele kantle mabaleng.*

*Motho oa ma-Lebajoa la Nkoanyane,*

*Motho oa Tšele le Letuka.*

[I am **MOSIA MOTOBATSI**(one of the cat)

A person with a machetes that do not dry,

It should not ooze blood in the house,

It should dry outside on the battlefield.

The one of 'Malebajoa, daughter of Nkoanyane,

The one of Tšele and Letuka.]

(Matšela and Moletsane, 2006:33)

The Basia are a Sotho collective (clan) that venerate a *mosia* (cat). Damane (2006: ii) says the Basia clan was formed during the time of Queen Monyalue who was married to Mokotjo of the Batlokoa clan. When chief Mokotjo died, Queen Monyalue's people supported her. They had many fights amongst themselves and often with other people hence, they say their machetes ooze blood. They fought the Ngunis, i.e. the Mangwane and Mahlubi and the Bafokeng, which is a Sotho lineage.

The poem shows how the community was formed, how it is related to other communities in its lineage, and what made it separate from that community into another clan. It is an attempt by Sotho people to maintain the name of a lineage and to maintain the history of its link with other clans of similar origin or lineage. To express this link, the Sotho groups created the proverb *ho ya*

*ka makgoro ha se ho lahlana* (to part ways does not mean to disassociate oneself from our common origin), i.e. by establishing a new community, sometimes with a different totem, does not separate one from the original Sotho lineages and way of doing things. People are seen as narrators of their experiences; they give an account of who they are, tell who they are not, and explain who they want to be (Fludernik, 2009:2; Yuval-Davis, 2010: 266; Phafoli and Zulu, 2014:181). The Sotho establish their new community by creating a totem narrative that explains their origin and formation. Sometimes they also create a new name for a totem. However, since the communities are not obliged to stay in the same place, segments of the same totem are found across the three Sotho groups.

A Sotho traditional game '*Mantlatilane* gives children an opportunity to know their clan or family praise poem so they learn from an early age how to represent their lineage. According to (Jaspal, 2008):

[The] ethnic group is important in early life due to value attached and emotional significance towards one as a member of a group and the child, without being aware, is socialised in the group culture (Jaspal, 2008).

The '*Mantlatilane* game fulfils the sense of belonging described by Jaspal (2008). Fishman (1991a) says that in ethnic identity both clan and ethnic identity are inherited from birth and are immutable. The game teaches the children about their totem and its praise poem.

Two people among the Sotho groups play the game. The first speaker invites the second speaker to recite her/his totem praise poem. The second speaker responds to a set of questions from the first speaker that inspires him/ her to recite or *ho thella* (sing) his/her totem praise, e.g.:

1 <sup>st</sup> Speaker: <i>U tswa kae?</i>	[where do you come from?]
2 <sup>nd</sup> speaker: <i>Ha Mmantlatilane.</i>	[from Mmantlatilane's place.]
1 <sup>st</sup> Speaker: <i>Ua j'ang?</i>	[What did you eat?]
2 <sup>nd</sup> Speaker: <i>Bohobe.</i>	[I ate porridge.]

- 1<sup>st</sup> Speaker: *Ua futswela k'ang?* [What did you mix it with?]  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Speaker: *Ka metsi a pula.* [With rainwater.]  
 1<sup>st</sup> Speaker: *Thella he!* [Just slide/dance meaning sing it]  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Speaker: *Ke thelleteng ke le* [why should I slide, when I am...]

**Totem praise:**

*Mohlakwana Ua ma-Pholo'a Lisema!*

*Maila-ho-ngwathelwa,*

*Maja-polokwe kaofela.*

*Bahlakwana ha ba je sengwathwana sa maobane.*

*[A Mohlakwana of Pholo who comes from Lisema!]*

*One who does not want anybody to dish out food to her/him,*

*One who eats all the serving of bread.*

*The Bahlakwana do not eat the left overs]*

Here the child is taught in a form of a game that s/he should keep in mind that s/he belongs to the Bahlakwana genealogically. Matšela and Moletsane (20006:7) and the historical narrative of the Sotho at large says that the Bahlakwana venerate a crocodile. In this way, they are similar to the Bakwena who parted ways to form different communities in the past. This group of Bakwena decided to find a new way to venerate their experiences. When other people asked where they came from, they said *rona re hlaha kwana* (we come from there!). They were afraid to tell other communities whom they were due to wars, however they decided to keep their veneration.

Self-determination is the persistence to practice a similar culture even when people are no longer together (Smith, 1991 p.23 & 94). This includes communities who have a similar outlook. People continue practicing their original culture in their everyday lives despite their different collectives, e.g. children learn about their clan and lineage through a totem and the above game. People also refer to each other by their totems. Raseleso, the SABC Sesotho newsreader, likes to say to the Sesotho weather forecast presenter, Lefu Motaung, *Sebata* (A lion!) indicating *ahe tau!* ~ *Motaung* (You of the lion clan!) to alert Motaung that it is now his time to take over as he



(Raseleso) has finished reading the news. The Sotho people tend to refer to others or themselves by their clan or lineage (c.f Matšela & Moletsane, 2006)

People still recognise each other by their similar totems across the three groups. Jaspal (2008) argues that totems and their praises are invoked and used to indicate group membership, particularly when the groups feel that their identities are endangered. The groups use a given totem as an act of determination. Makara in *Bafokeng* collected the Bafokeng *ba ha Sebolela Kuena* totem amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho), although these Bafokeng are in Rustenburg among the Tswana and are related to the Bapedi lineage.

Jaspal (2009) adds that common social ties encourage a common identity with which to bind groups, e.g. the presentation of the Bafokeng across the three groups above. The Bataung who come from the Bahurutse lineage, which literature tells is predominant in Botswana, are also similar to those among Basotho (Southern Sotho). Mangoaela (1997), in Chief Moletsane of the Bataung praise poems, describes the Bataung (Bahurutse) presence among the Batswana as *tlhatlha li tlhakhile re tla tshela ka moka* (when the reeds are grown we shall all cross). This idiom originates from the Bataung lineage dialect. The praise poems mention that other Sotho lineages mock the Bataung by repeating this idiom, although where the mockery comes from is unknown. Moletsane uses it to address the Barolong chief at Thaba Nchu to remind Moshoeshoe 1 of the Bakuena that they come from the same origin.

During an interview with Ratokelo Nkoka (pers com 2013),<sup>20</sup> he had the following to say about the similarities of the Sotho:

Bafokeng are the ones that arrived first in the south, in Lesotho. Actually, Bataung came and stayed [among the Bafokeng]. The people that you might say arrived later, though not so late in the 1850s are the Batlokwa who also have relatives in Botswana even

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<sup>20</sup>A former Sesotho and history teacher and a principal in Lesotho. A participant and a member of national committee in Mokhatlo oa Litichere tsa Sesotho in Lesotho. He now holds a position of a Director at Radio Lesotho and runs researches on the historical narrative issues amongst the Sotho across Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana, that he broadcasts on Lesotho Television.

in South Africa. There are still Batlokoa, Basia and Makgolokwe. As we said, there are Batlokowa, Bakgatla, Bakuena and those of Seretse in Serowe, which are the same with these ones... It is still like here in Botswana.

What the above quotation means is that there has been a movement of similar people from one place to another when the clans of the Basotho parted ways, e.g. the Bafokeng, Batlokoa, Makgolokoe, Basia, Bataung, Bakgatla left behind other similar communities causing a similarity of the clans among the Sotho groups. Nkoka further mentions that the Bakgatla and Batlokoa also joined the Bafokeng. Later, the Bakgatla lineage amalgamated with the Sotho lineages under the Bapedi polity forming the third Sotho group who are similar to the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana.

Tajfel (1978a) says that “part of an individual’s self-concept, which derives from his/her knowledge of his/her membership in a social group, helps a person to identify with his/her people.” This compares to Smith’s view that an individual has intrinsic knowledge and potential performance of his cultural aspects. All the groups sharing the common story of the formation of a Sotho clan preserve the same totem.

The Sotho describe the lineages of the Sotho with similar totems, i.e. the Bafokeng, Bakuena and Bataung amongst the Sotho show the Sotho clan similarity and assert self-determination of the Sotho identity (Breutz, 1991:13; Gill, 2010:27; Ellenberger, 1997: vii & 34).

In the following interview, Mathealira Seeiso (pers com 2013) shows how the making of further clans from a mother lineage forms further communities that are alike:

[The] Tswana are our younger brothers ... we left them as we were driving down. Bapedi are our younger brothers as well, who we left at None when we were moving down. So the Bapedi say, "Moshoeshoe roll down a blanket so that a Mopedi can walk down an isle" ... typical Sotho.

What Chief Mathealira states is that the lineages of the Bapedi and Batswana are similar to the Bakuena clan amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and that the Mohurutse, Kuena and Mokhatla are the three sons of Malope ('Musi) according to Ellenberger's (1997:335) lineage tree explained below:

Both the Bakuena clan amongst the Basotho through their ancestor Khabo and the Bamangoato and Ngoaketsi in Botswana, come from Kuena who is the second son of Malope. Khabo is the eldest son, while Ngoato is the second and Ngoaketsi is the last. Mokhatla/ Mokgatla is the last son of 'Musi and his son is Tabane who produced the five Sotho clans ... amongst whom are the Bapedi.

Ellenberger (1997:335) explains why chief Mathealira (pers com 2013) above mentions that the Batswana and Bapedi are the Basotho (Southern Sotho) brothers. Ellenberger (1997) explains that Malope is the common ancestor of the three Sotho groups of the Bakuena lineage. Khabo, the eldest son of Malope begot the Bakuena who now form the group of Basotho (Southern Sotho).

Kuena, the second son of Malope, begot the Bakuena amongst Batswana who now call themselves by the names of Kuena's sons or their fathers -Bamangoato and Bangoaketse literally translated '[Bakuena] those of Ngoato and Ngoaketsi '. Mokgatla in the lineage of the Bakuena came much later through one of the Bakuena members called 'Musi through his son Tabane who begot the Bakgatla lineage because of his son Mokhatla/ Mokgatla. Basotho (Southern Sotho) in Lesotho present the lineage of the Bapedi as Mokhatla in writing, while the rest of the Sotho groups in Botswana, Basotho in South Africa and Bapedi write Mokgatla's lineage as 'Mokgatla'.

Sub-groups "reflect a membership of a particular sub-culture and endow members with a sense of distinctiveness from other" (Jaspal, 2009:8). The formation of the Sotho sub-groups or clans

distinct from further communities as Sotho creates a similar people in different communities, e.g. Lozi (Barotse). The Bafokeng lineage migrated with one of their chieftaincies, called Sebetoane, from the Basotho (Southern Sotho), which makes them a variety of a clan as a sub-culture.

During an interview, Dr Mildred Wakumelo (pers com 2012) talked about the formation of different identities when similar people establish more than one group:

So there is lot of similarity in the context that you might find out that someone is speaking in Lozi, Southern Sotho are able to understand. And then there is someone speaking in Southern Sotho, Lozi are able pick somewhere else. But the funny part would be, the Southern Sotho who would be listening to Lozi would say, "are you learning Sesotho?" Then the person would be thinking, "are you learning Lozi?" Or something like that, that kind of attitude.

According to Dr Wakumelo, although there are still a lot of similarities in the Sotho established groups, members of the group decided to go their separate ways and hence some differences developed, e.g. the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and the Lozis. Jaspal (2009:8) explains, "Bricolage is a repertoire of cultural elements that enables the establishment of distinctive identity". This is observed in the formation of sub-groups where lineage varies to form the Sotho clans. One origin supersedes notions associated with the variations, hence this origin creates similarities (Jaspal, 2009:8), e.g. the Sotho groups association with the ancient lineages of Barolong and Bafokeng that determined a similar Sotho people.

Ellenberger (1988:12) says that the Bapedi are related to the Bafokeng and respect them because one of the Bafokeng princesses was married into the Bakgatla lineage and her son formed the present Sotho group, the Bapedi, and another four lineages among the Sotho groups. Combining information about the Bafokeng amongst the Sotho provides a coherent narrative of Sotho identity, i.e. that they are a similar people.

According to Legassick (1969:94), the above explanation of the Sotho dispels the notion that the Sotho are a separate people created by the missionaries who saw the Sotho groups as different and fragmented. Legassick (1969:94) says the missionaries recorded the Sotho identity according to the histories of the particular communities with which they were concerned. They modified and amplified others on a detailed level, which affected the historical account of the actual Sotho similarity. However, Legassick (1969:94) shows that piecing together the literature on Sotho identity provides a coherent narrative of Sotho origin.

The Sotho clans are a variety of the Bafokeng and Bahurutse. The Bakuena come from the Bahurutse, which means their paternal line comes from the Barolong lineage; the Bakuena chieftaincy amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) has paternal links to the Barolong and is maternally related to the Bafokeng; the Bafokeng in Rustenburg are among the Batswana group, and yet they are from the paternal side of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) group (Damane, 1993:07).

Damane (1993:07) writes:

*Joale ho Barolong ho tsoile Bahurutse, 'me ho bona ha tsoa  
Bakoena, Basiea, Batlokoa, Bataung, Bapeli le ba bang....  
Bafokeng ke bona ba baholo har'a liboko tsohle tsa Basotho le  
Batsoana. Ke sebokosa khale haholo 'me ba fumanoa hohle  
Lesotho le Botsoana.*

[The Barolong begot the Bahurutse, and the Bahurutse begot the Bakoena, Basia, Batlokoa, Bataung, Bapeli and others ... The Bafokeng are the oldest lineage amongst all the Sotho lineages of the Basotho and Batsoana. It is a lineage from antiquity and they are found all over Lesotho and Botsoana.]

In other words, the oldest lineages are the Bafokeng and Barolong. The Barolong are paternally related by blood to the Bahurutse, who are second in the genealogy line. At least five Sotho

lineages come from the Bahurutse and Bafokeng, i.e. the Bakoena, Basia, Batlokoa, Bataung and Bapeli (Bapedi).

Borrowing from Jaspal (2009:8), it seems that while there is agreement that new identities are being made by begetting new lineages due to marriage, there is preservation of identity and culture for the prosperity of a nation. Kriel (2010:48) agrees with Jaspal (2009) above by resonating with what has been said about the Bafokeng in the eastern region of the Highveld by Ellenberger (1988:11). The Bafokeng family *ba ha Sebolela Kuena* use their name, the Bafokeng, as their Sotho identity (Damane, 1993:07; Kriel, 2010:47-49). This youngest family of the Sotho chieftaincy amongst the Bafokeng, their lineage is their most modern representation. The Bafokeng are also found in Lesotho and the Free State (Makara, 2010:03). Similar representation by a lineage or clan is the naming of places such as Taung in the North West, Mohale's Hoek in Lesotho, Tlokweng in Botswana, and Mokhotlong district in Lesotho.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The chapter concludes that the Sotho have a similar language that indicates their origin. The form and content of their language is the same, the Sotho only differ in how they prefer to use it in different regions through accent, pronunciation and orthography caused by the geographical environment and people from other nationalities who affect the different Sotho regions. The Sotho also share the name "Basotho" from either the narrative perspective, the colour or customs and values that relate to their clothing style; as a result, they show a similar origin.

The chapter examined the myth of *Ntswanatsatsi* to draw similarities among the Sotho groups. Ntswanatsatsi is a fictitious place in the past from where the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi say they originated. The chapter discussed Sotho places with similar names, indicating a common outlook in their culture of naming, e.g. more than one place is named Matloangtloang or Lehurutse.

The chapter also showed that the Sotho groups are all represented by their similar lineages, i.e. Bafokeng, Bataung and Bakuena. The thesis showed that two lineages of the Bafokeng and Bahurutse collective intermarried and formed further small similar communities. The two

original communities of the Sotho further formed other small communities as their population grew or because of disagreements. However, similarities in the names of totems remained across the Sotho groups.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **INVESTIGATING THE SOCIAL SIMILARITY OF SOTHO**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the similarity of the Sotho culture was discussed regarding the aim of the thesis, which is to understand the cultural, social and political similarities of the Bafokeng, Bakuena and the Bataung lineages amongst the Sotho in order to establish the oneness of the Sotho groups. The social practices of the Sotho are now examined for further analysis of the oneness of the Bapedi, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana. The term "social" means, "one relates to activities where one meets and spends time with others", i.e. it is how people interact with each other in a social setting.

The chapter will show that the Sotho have similar practices with regard to their lifecycles, i.e. from birth, becoming a man or woman with initiation rites being the most salient practice, marriage and death.

The Sotho groups portray birth attendants through their similar folktales and idiomatic expressions. The chapter looks at the seclusion period while the nursing mother and her child is taken care of; the child's social development. Furthermore it looks at lebollo (initiation school) amongst the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) as pivotal in teaching young men and women about their roles in providing and caring for their family and society. The chapter also discusses similar cultural practices such as *bohali* (bride price) in marriage amongst the Sotho. The final section discusses the importance of slaughtering a cow and processes of burial when a person has passed on amongst the Sotho.

#### **5.2 Similarity among the Sotho regarding birth and raising children**

This section discusses similarities between the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) regarding birth practices, i.e. the care of the nursing mother and her child by the birth attendants, and the raising of children. Folk tales and idioms help prepare the child to become independent and to develop social skills, and taboos and myths empower them to avoid danger and to take



care of themselves. The society also introduces the children to their roles as female or male through games that promote gender roles and chores, such as taking care of the home and going to war respectively.

### 5.2.1 Sotho and their birth practices

Sotho women are supportive towards one another. For instance, during and after birth, a Sotho woman is cared for by other women, usually her relatives. This is shown in Sotho folktales such as *Moleso wa Dikgomo* (Cows' Fodder), a folktale amongst the Bapedi, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana. While the narrative is the same, the Bapedi title *Mabele a hlahile jwang?* (Where does the sorghum originate?) explains why the narrative is told.

In the folktale, the female attendant is a co-wife of the baby's mother. She helps her give birth, but is jealous of her because their husband will love her more as she has now given birth to his child. The helping co-wife decides to place poison in the *Mabele* soft porridge (*lesheleshele*) she cooks for the new mother. The Sotho normally give *lesheleshele* to a nursing mother but at that time, it was considered cows' fodder. However, instead of dying, the nursing mother becomes strong and beautiful to the chagrin of the co-wife.

Another folktale showing that Sotho women traditionally help each other during childbirth is about chief Bulane and his wives. Chief Bulane marries two wives. When a wife who is close to chief Bulane's heart is about to give birth, the other wife becomes the midwife. She is alone with the prospective nursing mother, where chief Bulane cannot enter. While the other woman is unconscious, she takes her baby and gives him to the mouse behind the clay pots. The mouse bring up the child and pass him on for adoption. In the mean time, the midwife presents the nursing mother with a puppy and tells her that she bore a dog.

After a child is born, the mother and child are kept in a separate hut for at least three months. The hut is marked with a *lehlaka* (long reed), representing the Sotho origin, i.e. the reeds from Ntswanatsatsi, and a symbol to show that only certain people may enter the hut because *ke ka motswetseng* (this is where the nursing mother is). The Batswana call the aforementioned long reed marking a separate nursing mother and her child's hut *mopakwana*. The mother and the

child are sheltered to avoid contamination with germs that cause diseases and to protect mother and child from witchcraft and other bad influences that might affect the health of the child. The practice of seclusion is shown in the Sotho common folktale of Bulane above.

According to Segoete (2015:01), the Sotho groups have a way of dealing with the nursing mother and the child. In his narration, Segoete's character, Raphepheng, represents all the Sotho groups (Segoete, 2015:47-50). When the baby and mother's seclusion comes to an end, certain rituals are performed, e.g. the child is presented to the first rain *ho behella puleng* (to bring the child in contact with rain) and *ho kuruetsa* (showing the child the moon). The ceremonies prepare the baby to socialise with other children as the first step to learning social skills. This also equips the child to withstand life's difficulties.

### 5.2.2 Sotho and the raising of children

After the birth of a child (first stage), the Sotho groups help to raise the child (second stage). During an interview, Moeketsi Lesitsi<sup>21</sup> (pers com 2013) had the following to say about how the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi raise their children:

All the black nations that you have mentioned have the same culture. All of them! Let me tell you why I say that, so that we look at what are the foundations of a culture. You know them, isn't it?...The second one [stage] where we the Sotho are the same is the bringing up of the children.

All the Sotho groups seem to use oral folklore to show their children and youths what daily chores they are to perform. For example, the riddle *hlohloro bupi, re je kgetse* (empty the bag and eat it or shake off the bad thing and eat the bag) in Sepedi is similar to Setswana's *ka tlhotlhora bupi ka ja kgetsi*, though the words *ka tlhotlhora...ka ja kgetsi* are more similar to the Sesotho variation of the language. *Latlha o je kgetsi* (throw away and eat the bag) is another

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<sup>21</sup> Moeketsi Lesitsi is a graduant and says was also a teacher at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS). He later taught at the Botswana and taught Sesotho in Lesotho. He is a member of Mokhatlo wa Litichere tsa Sesotho in Lesotho translated the *Sesotho Teachers Organisation* and was on its national committee. He is the author of Sesotho literature with regard to Basotho (Southern Sotho) traditional practices, e.g. *Seemahale*. The Sesotho books he has authored are used both in high schools and universities.

Setswana variation of the riddle and *ka qhala phoofa ka ja mokotla* (I spilled the mealie meal and ate the bag) is a contemporary Sesotho variation. This is a choice of words after the introduction of mealie bags that are manufactured and are used to put in the mealie meal made from the modern mill by a milling company. Instead of one grinding mealie meal for herself, one has to buy it. Basotho wonder at this new development and versionalise it in an old riddle. The same riddle now appears in various choices of words in a similar language, i.e. Setswana, Sepedi and Sesotho.

The above riddles teach cleanliness and the procedures that need to be followed in cleaning offal. The riddle also teaches biological aspects, remaining digested food in the offal of a slaughtered animal has to be thrown away and the offal has to be cleaned and cooked. It should not be thrown away as well. Furthermore, the children are taught that slaughtering an animal for food and eating the offal is a cookery and nutritional aspect practised amongst Sotho society. A similar riddle is performed for children amongst the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho); the animal's entrails, i.e. the heart, brain, intestines etc. are not thrown away, the Sotho groups eat them. In addition, since the words "throw away" appear in the riddle, it might be an irony to remind the children that it is taboo to eat most of the insides of an animal. Bereng (2010a: 21-22) mentions that during puberty, boys and girls are not allowed to eat eggs and most of the insides of animals, among other things. These part of food are too nourishing and will make the boys and the girls mature quickly.

Finnegan (2012), Guma (1967) and Moleleki (1993: 23-24) present a riddle in the form of a game played by at least two people. The partners in the game present it in the form of a question that portrays quizz characteristics and the responded gives an answer to this quizz. The following is the activity of a riddle game when it is played.

Quizer: *Ka u lotha!*

[Let me quiz you!]

Respondend: *K'ang? (ka eng?)*

[With what]

Quizer: *Ka lapana la 'Mankokotiane?*

[with *lapana la 'Mankokotiane?* (With 'Mankokotiane's little family?)]

Respondent: *Ke meno.*

(It is teeth)

If the queezed does not know the answer to the riddle, she or he expands the horizon of her partner and herself finding out about their live experiences through asking another riddle. The former respondent says she is buying an answer of the riddle she was previously asked. The player wants to show that s/he is eager to know more about her environment and wants the game to continue. The former responded wants his or her counterpart to be in the same position as s/he expects the former quizzer to respond to her or his question. The other Sotho groups, apart from the Sesotho example given above have the similar way of beginning to play the riddle as they say *mpoleleldiloke go bolele!* (Tell me things and let me explain to you) which is a variation of a Sesotho sentence ~ *mpolelle dintho ke u hlaloseitse*. Another way of asking a Mosotho to allow one to explain something is to say *kea o botsa* meaning 'I am asking you'. The Bapedi use this expression instead to say 'explain to me' as in *mpotše*, an equivalent of Sesotho *mpotse* from the verb stem *botsa* varied only with the orthography. *Mpotše* is a variation of *mpolelele* in Setswana and *mpolelle* in Sesotho.

The following riddle activity shows where the respondent buys a riddle because s/he does not know the answer.

Quizzer: Ka u lotha!

[let me quiz you!]

Respondent: K'ang?

[With what?]

Quizzer: Mme ntshware ke nye?

[Mother hold me when I shit?]

The Respondent: Ka se reka.

[Let me buy it.]

The former Quizer: K'ang?

[With what?]

The former respondent cum Quizer: Ha u le morwa tjee, metsi o a nka kae?

[When you are this red like a bushman,  
Where do you get water?]

The former quizzer: *Sa ka ke nko.*

[Mine (riddle) is a nose.]

.....

The former respondent cum Quizer: *Sa ka ke lehapu.*

[Mine is water melon ]

Through the intervention of ‘buying’ in Sotho riddles, the equivalence of anti quizzing with another riddle, the children learn more about their environment, hence they learn about their ways of life as Sotho children.

Oral folklore and riddles teach people about their surroundings and the usefulness of values, customs and norms. This concept is in agreement with ecocritics, which is an emerging view in literature. Ecocriticism is the study of literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary point of view, where literature scholars analyse texts that illustrate environmental concerns and examine the various ways literature treats the subject of nature (Sone, 2014:197; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996: xviii, Estok, 2001:220; Cohen, 2004:10; Gomides, 2006:16). Sone (2014) and others above in other words say as a person encounters her/his environment through literature, s/he learns about her expected and unexpected practices of life that brings about positive learning of what is expected of him/her in the society as explained by the interaction of the Sotho groups children above through their similar oral stories. Bereng, Haley and Millin (2010) and Bereng (2010a:21-22) resonates with Sone (2014) that the oral folklore is not just [an] artistic work of literature, it also describes and imparts a particular society’s customs, values and norms to their children.

Moleleki (1993: 29-30) explains that the Sotho people who want to learn their ways of life play the game riddles that helps them to scrutinize their environment. They see similarity even where those who are sensitive in explaining the environment with closed eyes would not realise. In the riddle *lehahana la Raletswai* (the cave of Raletsoai [proper name translated father of salt]), they

realise a similarity between a cave and a nail and they realise the salty dirt inside the nail. The implication is that they learn that their environment has caves that help in protecting people and they are also natural phenomena. However nails should not be kept so that dirt cannot accumulate in them and cause germs. In this particular riddle the players of a riddle have learned about cleanliness and their natural environment.

Moleleki (1993) gives about ten types of life contexts that the riddles explain with regard to life experiences or the environment of the Sotho and how they treat them. One of the contexts is that riddles explain the behaviour expected from the youth. In an example

Q: *thope e paqang haholo*

(A girl who taps and sings a lot),

Answer: *dikgobe ka pitseng*

[the grains or beans in the pot.]

The riddle indicates that the Sotho society expects a lively girl child who participates in the mural activities such as singing. This riddle might remind the girls by the fire sight that there are Sotho girls activities such as *dipina tsa mokopu* traditional songs that allows them to tap and sing. However, the answer tells them that they are also expected to help with household chores like cooking. While they are involved with such chores that need attention, they should not go far and play. The pots are going to burn.

Furthermore Sotho riddles explain that religion and prayer are part of the sotho way of life. The following riddle explains the scripture of the Bible.

Q: *Bitla le a phela, le mofu o a phela. Re tsebisitswe hore mofu o shwele empa re fumana a ntse a phela, le lebitla le ntse le phela.*

(The grave is alive and the corpse is alive. We were told that the corpse is dead but we have found that it is alive, and the grave is alive.)

Answer: *Jonase ya neng a romilwe Ninive.*

[Jonas who was send to Niniveh]

The Basotho philosophy through riddles is sharing with children that there is death through the actual riddle quiz or question part. When a person is dead, it has to be announced so that the person can be taken to the grave. That respect offered to him or her but in this case it is puzzling that the dead is still alive but s/he is certified dead. The grave itself is also a metaphor as it is a living thing. The children have to find an answer in the environment, similar to the situation.

The biblical text “Jonas is send to Niniveh” comes into the picture. A big fish / shark swallowed Jonas when he refused to be send by God. While in the belly of the fish equivalent to his grave, he had to agree to God who wanted to send him to Niniveh to help people by preaching about God. The children learn that God has to be part of their life. Basotho believe in God and they have even adopted the Bible and the Christian way of life to show it. They hate evil or bad things that are compared to fish that swallows people but throws them out when they do good things.

The children also learn of a similarity of Jonah (Jonase) to the person who refuses to be send by ancestors as a sangoma – *lethuela*. She or he becomes sick and curtailed until one can fulfil the process of being a *lethuela*. The person agrees to go for a traditional training of knowing how to communicate with the ancestors that in turn are close to God. He or she is able to heal people through this gift. As a result, this new riddle also caters for the original spirituality practices of Sotho. After a person completes the training, s/he is fully healed and becomes a traditional doctor. The riddle becomes a lesson that if one is called by ancestors to be a traditional healer, one should not resist to help other people. It is also of no use to resist the calling as the ancestors have a way of making one sick.

The riddles also help the children to be aware of supernatural processes and find answers to them. In the riddle *shweshwe tsa mohlaka o moholo* (daffodils among the reeds in a big lake), the answer is the stars in the firmament. The children admire the power of having the stars in the blue sky that characterises their Southern Africa region. They also learn geographical process

further by comparing the sky with flowers gathered in a lake. They admire the wonders of the natural processes.

The riddles also make the children aware of the important expertise in the community and its foundation in the gender roles. For example,

Question: *Monna eo e reng ha a tla ja a otlwe hloohong*

(A man who when he eats, is beaten on the head)

Answer: *Dithakgisa*

(the sticks that are tucked on the hide that are being tanned)

The riddle explains that it is important that the tanning of leather is done in the society. Mostly it is done by men, hence the explanation of the quiz is part of the riddle, that shows a man being the metaphor of the *dithakgisa*, these are the sticks that hold down the hide so that a man can tan a leather.

The Sotho riddles also portray agricultural practice among the Sotho. For example,

Question: *Thankgathankga ke tla tswalla kae?*

(Here and there where am I going to have my child?)

Answer: *Mokopu*

(Pumpkin)

The children are reminded that in order to eat one has to plant crops. So, one of the Basotho crops is *mokopu* - pumpkin. The Batswana have *Sa tampatampasaya go tsalelafale* (Here and there where am I going to have my child?) as a similar riddle. They are reminded of the proverb *matsoho a lemisetsa mmetso* (hands grow food for the throat). The meaning of the proverb is that people have to plant food in order to survive.

The children are also made aware of super natural power such as witchery within the society. For example,



Question: *Baloi ba qabana ka lehaheng?*

(The witches are making a quarrel in a pot).

Answer: *dikgobe*

(boiling grains in a pot)

Bewitching someone is a mystery because majority of people do not know how it is done. For example the Sotho always wonder how one is able to fly using a broom at night. It is beyond a human comprehension, and it is done by women – hence their quarrel in the pot. They are the ones that cook food, they can do wonderful things in house keeping by caring for the family. Yet the women can do extra ordinary things as witches, hence the myth that they are also able to fly at night.

The riddles also fulfil the quest to understand why natural things are there and how they operate for the Sotho children. They experiment with riddles to understand chemistry and physical science. The following riddle discusses the law of motion.

Question: *Ka re ke jala hlanyelo ya ya mela thabeng.*

(I said I plant my seeds it got planted on the mountain)

Answer: *Sephadi / Sethunya*

(A whip / A gun)

The movement of the hand of this person imitates the movement of a person who plants seeds in the field. The seeds fall to the ground and then they are covered with soil to allow germination. But it is surprising because when a person uses a whip, the same does not apply, it whovers in the air and its sound makes an echoe. The similar situation happens with a gun. The bullet is thrust forward to hit its enemy.

Apart from scientific explanation the children are also advised that hitting or shooting someone either in the community or war is serious and cannot be taken for granted, it does not go down well as it is painful and might cause damage. One must have committed a serious crime to

deserve such a serious discipline. The seriousness is compared with that of initiation school where the initiates are punished severely when they have done something wrong. Hence the word *Thabeng* (at the initiation school) is used to explain the seriousness of the ammunition and the beating punishment. The children are encouraged not to embark in things that make the parents to be harsh on them.

Sometimes the Sotho show that they welcome modern things that they have adopted in the society through riddles. For example, they accept and understand writing in the following riddle.

Question: Tshimo ya ka eo ke e lemanang ka matsoho,

ha dijo tsa yona di butswitse ke di kotula ka mahlo.

(My field that I plough with hands

When its food is ready, I reap with eyes)

Answer: *Mongolo*

(Writing)

This riddle also encourages children to go to school and acquire literacy. Monyakane (2006) mentions writing as a modern way of communication and literacy that came with the missionaries from the Western world amongst the Sotho groups. The Sotho adopted reading and writing as part of their way of life that empowers them.

The oral folklore is peculiar to a specific society and it contains that society's outlook with regard to the ways of life of the said society. This means that the Batswana, Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) have the same origin, as they have similar folklore that shows their similar outlook and way of life.

Another example of the similar way in which the Sotho groups raise their children is that the folktale *Tselane le Dimo* (Tselane and the cannibal) is told across the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana. A similar folktale *Tselane le Dimo* is told in Setswana and Sesotho, and *Tselane le Makgema* is told in Sepedi. The only variation among the Sotho groups is the name given to the cannibal.

That the cannibal is given different names shows that the Sotho practice naming. There is a cannibal among the Bapedi whose birth name is Makgema, which is a Sotho proper name, and amongst the Sotho, there are cannibals like Makgema, who is a product of the Bapedi.

The following narrative of the folktale is similar amongst the three groups:

Long, long ago, Tselane's parents decided to leave their old house and move to a new house in another village. Tselane refused to go with them and decided to stay in her old home. After Tselane's mother brought Tselane food, she always told Tselane to close the door when she leaves and not to open the door unless she hears her mother singing a certain song. One day Dimo (Makgema) arrived outside Tselane's house and sang Tselane's mother song in a deep voice. Tselane did not open the door as she recognised that this was not her mother singing. Dimo/Makgema then used a different strategy. He swallowed a red-hot iron to make his voice melodious like that of Tselane's mother. When he sang to Tselane, she opened the door and Dimo put her into his *kgetsi/ mokotla* (bag).

The above folktale sometimes ends by describing Dimo showing off his booty to the society and Tselane having to repeat that she cannot talk much as she is in Dimo's *kgetsi* (bag). Dimo sojourns at the home of Tselane's maternal uncle (*malome*) and her cousins rescue her while Dimo is drunk. The cousins put all sorts of poisonous small animals, including bees, into the bag and Dimo dies either because of their venom or by throwing himself into a dam due to the excruciating pain caused by the bee stings. He is therefore unable to cook Tselane.

This folktale teaches children amongst the Batswana, Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) that they should not stay alone, but should always be under the protection of their parents. They are taught that relatives on the maternal side of the family are also their close relatives, i.e. their *bo motswala* (cousins) and *malome* (maternal uncle). The words *kgetsi* and *mokotla* are juxtaposed to show that they are a variety of the Sotho vocabulary that is not only available in riddles as a metaphoric literary aspect, as in the above riddle. Children grow up knowing similar folklore

across the three Sotho groups as their heritage, asserting their practice of a similar Sotho way of life indicating their same origin.

The above Folktales show children how to show respect, hospitality and generosity and incrementally introduce them to the term *malome* and one's cross cousins. Acceptable behaviour in the form of politeness, willingness to serve and courtesy or good manners found in the folktale are a Sotho way of life that the elders encourage in children most of the time. The proverb *thupa e otlollwa e sa le metsi* (the whip is straitened while it is still supple), is used amongst the Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho). The Bapedi supplement the word *metsi* (water) with the word *nenene* (a supple branch) meaning the suppleness of the branch whip shows the seriousness of the Sotho in instilling values and norms in young children. Batswana say *lore lo ojwa lo sa le metsi* which is a variation of the abovementioned Sesotho and Sepedi version. The Batswana mention *thupa* as *lore*. *Ojwa* of Setswana is a variation of Sesotho *kgojwa* meaning an action that can be performed on a malleable object like wet clay as in a supple branch.

All the Sotho groups commonly address each other with words peculiar to all the groups as a form of respect when greeting one another, during conversations, while referring to others, or responding to one another. The Sotho people consider a mere "yes" (e!) as impolite when answering a question or responding to a greeting, it has to be, *e ntate* (yes father) in Sepedi and Sesotho, with the variation *Rra* in Setswana or *Mme* (yes mother). *Ra* in Sesotho is now attached to a child's name to indicate her/ his father. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) have trickled this practice into the use of proper names and praise poems.

The following lines from a praise poem portray the use of *Ra* where a man is particularised by his protégé:

Rakong la ntate la *Rannehela*

[At the hedge of my father (Manehella's father) Rannehela]

Motho o mosooana wa *Rasenate*

[Rasenate's /(Senate's father) person who is light in complexion]

(Mangoaela, 2013:232)

The above names refer to Moshoeshoe 1 who had a daughter Senate, as a result, he is called Rasenate. Manehella is another child of Moshoeshoe. These varieties of the particularisation of relations take into consideration the age of a person who is being addressed or to whom a response is given.

Sotho use comparisons and myths to chide bad behaviour amongst the youth and children. Myths are used to explain to children, in simple terms, the difficult, sensitive and excruciating experiences they need to avoid. The myths narratives are similar amongst the three groups.

It [myth] expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of a ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man ... It is a charter of ... moral wisdom. (Malinowski, 1926 quoted by Bahta, 2014:170)

Thetso and Qhala (2014:198-205) discuss at length the examples of myths in the raising of a Mosotho child. There are both myths and taboo for girls and boys respectively. Mokitimi (1979:09) mentions that in Sesotho culture, girls are not allowed to sleep facing upwards as their uterus might be displaced and they may not conceive easily. Hence, the Basotho use this phrase to chide girls with this behaviour, *U se ke ua robala o hlabile mankokoane* (do not sleep facing upwards with your knees bend), (cf. Thetso & Qhala, 2014:201).

An example of a myth for boys is *se ke wa iphara jwaloka mosadi tjena* (do not sit with your feet folded and relaxed like those of a girl). The purpose is to teach boys that as they are future warriors, they should always be prepared. Thetso and Qhala (2014: 202) also quote *se ke ua lula joaloka mosali/ se ke ua lula u ipharile kapa o namme* (do not sit down with your feet crossed like those of a woman).

There are taboos for both boys and girls, e.g. if children sit with their backs turned away from a fire, they will become monkeys. Qhala and Thetso (2014:204) also quote the narrative *seke ua lula o furaletse mollo u tla fetoha tšoeane* (do not sit facing backwards at the fire side). The

children will obviously not turn into a monkey; however, they could lose their balance and harm themselves, so the Sotho elders try to empower them to avoid danger and injury.

The Sotho groups distinguish between boys and girls to socialise them properly. The following interview with Moeketsi Lesitsi (pers com 2013) observes this view:

When you have made a birthday party for your child, then you say I must buy my child new clothes and the beautiful ones for that matter." If you send someone for shopping and this person comes with the girl's clothes when your child is a boy, do you see what dimension it can take? Then you say, "we said we need clothes, but these ones are not of his sex." Even the cake you make. No, we know what the boys' clothes have to look like. We are together in the same procedures.

The above participant mentions that the Sotho groups, like other nations, also distinguish between girls and boys; adopt modern cultures like celebrating children's birthdays with a party with an appropriate cake for a boy or girl; and have different clothes for each gender.

The Sotho groups celebrate the sex of a child when a child is born. Relatives and friends soak the baby's father with water if it is a girl or beat the father with a stick if it is a boy representing the division of labour between males and females amongst the Sotho (Segoete, 2015:47-50; Bereng, 2010a:39-40). The girls are responsible for household chores including drawing water for cooking, washing and smearing the floors. The boys will be preoccupied with war to protect the people and land in future.

This is also shown in the games children play. Girls among the Batswana, Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) play *Mmantlwane*, the equivalent to playing house and a motherly role. In this way, the girls are introduced to their role as women before the initiation school training. Girls also play *kgati* (skipping) to celebrate the development of their bodies. All the Sotho groups

either say *banana ba tlola kgati* (girls are skipping the rope) or *Banana ba bapala kgati* (the girls are playing [bapala] the rope).

The Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana boys go to the veld to look after animals and play *ho lefetsa* (protect yourself), a game similar to fencing, with sticks from tree branches or maize/sorghum stocks, to learn fighting skills. On 26/08/2015 the author had a discussion about Bapedi children's games with four Bapedi nationals who mentioned that Bapedi boys learn *ho itefella le ho lwana* (to fight) and that the Basotho (Southern Sotho) say *itshereletsa* instead of *itefella* but still use *ho loana* (to fight). The word *itefella* has been transferred to *ho lefeletsa* (to fight back).

The word *lefeletsa/itefella* is found in the praise poems of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) – chief Masopha's praise poems transferred into the creative poetic language of a praise poem while maintaining the same view on the technique used in fighting. *Ho itefella* has turned into the Sotho proper name, Malefetsane, which is given to a boy child, as in the praise poem below:

*Malefetsane* e motshwana Letsitsa  
[*Malefetsane* the black one Letsitsa]  
*Lwana o lefetse* hlooho ya rangwanao  
[Fight and retaliate for the sake of your uncle]  
*O lefetse* hlooho ya Makhabane  
[Fight back for your uncle Makhabane]  
*Le bone* he Bakuena, ke e *lefelitse* hlooho ya Makhabane  
[You have seen then Bakuena, I fought back for Makhabane]  
*Ke mmolaile* morena wa Bathepu  
[I have killed the chief of Abatembu]

In the above praise poem, Chief Masopha seeks revenge as the Abatembu fought the Basotho (Southern Sotho) under the leadership of his uncle, chief Makhabane. However, the intension amongst the Sotho boys is not to hurt each other but to learn fighting skills in the form of a game for future purposes of protecting communities amongst all the Sotho groups. Therefore, the Sotho

are a similar people with similar techniques for protecting the country. Basotho (Southern Sotho) call this game *ho kalla*.

The expression *lefetsa* is seen as a game among the Bapedi and a similar game is expressed with varied names amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi. The similar skill and term, *lefetsa*, is used for a warrior who has fought for a Basotho (Southern Sotho) community. This vacillation of similar skills across the Sotho groups and their similarity across different stages of their maturity shows that the Sotho have the same origin. The term *lefella* becomes excursive, it gives a little window to see what is expected of a Sotho boy; one day the boy is going to be a warrior, hence it has the same origin as across the Sotho, showing a similar outlook on life.

*Morabaraba* is a game played with stones amongst the Sotho groups that teaches children how to count. The Bapedi sometimes call it *moruba* (Makopo, 1993:110). Another such game is *mokoro* amongst the Batswana. The above participatory observation that took place on 26 August, 2015 also revealed that there is a game called *keti* or *mokoro* amongst the Bapedi, and a *mokoro* or *seqha* (a weapon that shoots poisonous piercing arrow-like objects) amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) who adopted the term *seqha* from the San (Hlalele, 2005:236). The San amongst the Sotho were feared because of their arrows. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) said the Batswana knew that the "necks" of the San or Bushman's arrows were covered with a poisonous substance (Couzens, 2003:80).

The above information was passed on to the first missionaries such as Cassalis, who were always careful when they passed the premises of the *Barwa* (the San). The term *seqha* infers that the Sotho groups might have adopted the game from the San. According to Ellenberger (1997), the San already inhabited Southern Africa when the Sotho arrived from Ntswanatsatsi. A strong Y shaped short stick is fastened with an elastic band to both upper sides (these days boys use a rubber band) to aim at objects and hit them at a high speed. The boys hunt birds for game with this instrument.

*Qha!* is an idiophonic sound derived from the San language made by this stone as it leaves the band between the Y stick and hits an object. The word *mokoro* emanates from the verb *kora*



(shooting) in Sotho, which emanates from the experience of shooting at something. The *keti* is a Sotho name that emanates from the word *keto* indicating a form of Sesotho game played with one or more stones; the verb is *keta*, meaning enjoy the game of throwing around an object. Girls play *diketo* or *diketwana* amongst the three groups. Nowadays the Sotho language extends the use of the term when one meets a new environment similar to the old one. When one throws a ball up and down making it land on one's feet or hands repeatedly without passing it to anyone, people might say *o keta bolo*, s/he is enjoying himself or herself by artistically throwing the ball up and down with his/ her hands or feet.

The introduction of a universal modern way of living amongst the Sotho groups invites a view that the old foundations, i.e. the skills and vocabulary of the Sotho, are renewed and represented in new formations. As a result, the Basotho way of life does not become depleted but is enriched. The old ways are reconstituted by the new, i.e. the original skills of the Sotho are transferred to the new environment in an attempt to deal with the new situation. This transfer of Sotho practices increases the Sotho way of life and continues to be excursive to their origin.

The above variety of games show ways of naming a similar game amongst the Sotho groups or the adoption of new worthy material that can be incorporated into the current Sotho way of life. The Sotho transfer the older experience to modern experiences that are similar, as in the case of *ho keta bolo*. This is another game of the similar older skill brought by a new toy in the form of a ball. The skills of tossing an object might have been useful in the fight with spears and stones amongst the Sotho in the past; hence, one of the games' function is to learn skills to protect oneself. These games serve as a heritage to show the similar origin of the Sotho in modern times.

*Letsholo/ ho ya tsholong* is another game that prepares boys to eventually hunt game with the men. All the Sotho groups use *letsholo* (going for game) that was also used by the Sotho to pray for rain, e.g. boys play games such as *ho kgwasa ditadi* (hunting for mice). Boys either give their gains to women to cook at home in the evening or cook them themselves for lunch while looking after animals. These games prepare boys to become warriors. They also learn how to fend for

their families in future. Both boys and girls also go to the initiation school to further the foundation laid by the games, i.e. to learn about the Basotho ways and their division of labour.

### **5.3 Similarity between Sotho groups initiation into adulthood.**

This section discusses the involvement of Sotho in adulthood social practices. The section will discuss the initiation practice and chores. The argument is that the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana practice a similar initiation in the form of *lebollo*. Furthermore, there are similar chores and food preparation amongst Sotho groups. This section will show that dishes of the Sotho groups are similar in terms of their ingredients and preparation.

Certain proverbs among the Sotho teach that food should be for everyone through the concept of *tshimo ya dira* (a common/village field for every person). The section will also discuss the concept of *phabadimo* as a belief that is expressed with food and thanksgiving. Other chores include similar ways of taking care of the household like *ho dila* (smearing the floors). Taking care of the family's welfare is shown by hunting expeditions.

#### **5.3.1 Similar initiation steps defining Sotho groups**

Becoming an adult is the third stage of the Sotho groups' social dimension that discusses their similarity. Mulaudzi (2014:186) says that within an African context, young men and women attend an initiation institution that teaches them life skills, e.g. acquiring a livelihood, marriage and childbirth. The young people are taught to take responsibility for their actions in accordance with the values, customs and norms of their society so that they can be counted as grown up members of their families. The initiation training also teaches them about the knowledge systems of the society. There is a separate training for young men and women.

All three Sotho groups send their young men and women to initiation school, which is indicative of their coming of age. According to Monnig (1967:113) amongst the Bapedi, and Breutz (1991:124) amongst the Batswana, the Sotho have the similar initiation practice of *ho ya komeng* and *bogwera* amongst the Batswana and *ho ya bodika* and *bogwera* as two stages of *lebollo* amongst the Bapedi, and the Basotho (Southern Sotho) use *lebollo*. All three groups therefore follow this rite of passage. Guma (1967:116) refers to the songs that the boys are taught to create

as *dikoma*. *Dikoma* teaches the boys to create praise poems that are considered the highest form of literary art amongst the Sotho (c.f. Guma, 1967). The girls are said to go to *Madibeng*, which is the term for their initiation school amongst all three Sotho groups. Monnig (1967:125-126) mentions that the initiation school amongst the Bapedi is called *byale* and the initiates themselves in the process of training are called *bale* which is also a term available amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana for a girl initiate.

In the above explanation of the initiation ceremony, both male and female initiation processes and terms are similar across the three Sotho groups, which indicates that Sotho groups are similar in origin. Wardhaugh (2006:22) mentions that a social variety of a language determines how speakers perceive and organise the social world around them. Since the Sotho groups have a similar jargon or special language variety for describing *lebollo* and its processes amongst themselves, their social outlook is similar. The similarity of the initiation process and terms indicates that the Sotho have been together and are similar groups of a society.

The following interview with Dr Molema (pers com 2012) agrees with the similarity of the initiation ceremony practice as a social institution amongst the Sotho:

*Lebollo* in Sesotho – these are similar practices, even though they have different names, and boys do go to the initiation school (*ba bolola*), they go to *bogwera*, both words are there [in Setswana].

Dr Molema mentions that whereas Basotho (Southern Sotho) use the Sotho term *lebollo* to refer to the initiation school, the Batswana mostly use its equivalent *bogwera*, but both terms are available in Setswana as *bolola*~ *bogwera*. Monnig (1967:125-126) above mentions both words *lebollo* and *bogwera* as being available in Sepedi. *Lebollo* the practice and institution with a similar name among the Bapedi, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana, is an initiation institution and *bogwera* is the second stage of the *lebollo* proceedings amongst the Bapedi where the young men who have finished the first stage of *lebollo* are taught to network and form warrior groups.

The following interview with George Sebitloane (pers com 2012) again mentions that *lebollo* remains the same amongst the Sotho on the question that asks whether there are any common social practices (amongst the same lineages) in Batswana, Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho).

But this thing of *lebollo*, you call it *lebollo* ko, with the Basotho group [Southern Sotho] *neh*? We the Batswana call it *go rupisa*. But it is still the same thing. *Ene* you still find it when you go to places like Zeerust, even in Botswana. There are still some who say a young man before he can marry, needs to go to *bogwera* [initiation school] and get initiated.

The practice shows that the Sotho groups were once together. They regard *lebollo* as a social institution that keeps people together. Its significance is to glue the society together and from that angle to teach the young ones how to be men and women and politically protect the land.

The practice of *lebollo* is pivotal in that it exposes the Sotho young women and men to what is expected of them as adults in their daily lives in terms of values and customs, e.g. in the raising of children, married life, emotional intelligence and living together with the rest of society. The imparting of skills and past times are also taken into consideration (Manyeli and Machobane, 2001:89):

One can easily observe and recognize clear patterns and examples of the existence of some knowledge and products of basic stages of civilization. Basotho knew how to extract iron from iron-laden rocks. They had skills in tanning leather (*ho sua letlalo la matata*), skills of making pottery (*ho bopa dinkho, mafiso, lik'hona*), skills of knitting straw hats, straw mats, trays and sieves (*likatiba tsa ts'ets'e, moseme, sethebe, motlhotlo*), skills of constructing privacy [sic] courtyards (*seotloana*).

Pottery skills, leather tanning, iron smelting and grass weaving, among others, with regard to the work and civilization of the Basotho, are taught at the initiation school across the three groups of the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho). According to the above sources, young men and women go to the *lebollo/bogwera* to learn the skills and technology of Sotho as part of the Sotho preoccupation with life.

An interview with Ratokelo Nkoka<sup>22</sup> (pers com 2013) revealed that *lebollo* is a similar social practice amongst the Sotho groups, i.e. the Sotho groups come from the same origin:

*Lebollo* is among the things that were not modified with the meeting of the white and other nationalities by the Basotho. *Lebollo* has remained original. Botswana brings medical doctors at the time the initiation training is taking place. Lesotho has not yet used the medical doctors. The initiates are advised to use different blades. Each initiate should have his own blade to respond to the health issue. People suggest many things because of health purposes and again so that people should not pass diseases to another.

The Sotho groups are similar in that the initiates are also taught about hygiene and health issues. The participant mentions that the surgical procedure on the male initiates is a most important part of the initiation and that medical doctors are invited to do it. However, some Basotho groups have not decided to call on doctors to perform the traditional culture shared by all the Sotho groups, but use different blades to prevent HIV and Aids. The variations that are added to the Sotho *lebollo* have not affected the essence of the initiation school amongst the three Sotho groups, but have promoted it to continue with its purpose.

It seems that when the Sotho are no longer together, they make different decisions on how the same tradition must be continued and protected. This causes the variety of styles in terms of

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<sup>22</sup> Ratokelo Nkoka is a former principal teacher who used to teach Sesotho and history at high school level, a former committee member of Mokhatlo oa Litichere tsa Sesotho and now a manager of Lesotho Broadcast that includes both Radio and TV Lesotho.

practicing the same way of life. The above discussion shows that as new challenges present themselves to the way of life of the people, they modify culture with additional improvements, which might cause variations in the similar culture. Recently it was found that young men who have gone through the traditional initiation process of circumcision, have healthier sexual lives as their bodies do not succumb easily to sexually transmitted diseases. Hence, the Sotho groups have been observant about their health issues and have a similar practice as a society, but have added certain resources like the modern doctor and multiple blades to ensure that sexual health continues to be part of *lebollo*.

Chinua Achebe, in his novel *Things Fall Apart* (2008, initially published in 1958), mentions that a specialised vocabulary peculiar to a language of a particular society that describes their way of life cannot be translated into another society's language, since there is an absence of such a concept that expresses the way of life. As a result, he uses Igbo words to express the essence of the Igbo way of life while writing in English.

From the context, one understands that *obi* is a special hut used by the man of the family according to Igbo practices. There are Igbo proverbs such as *oji odu achu ijiji-o-o* (Achebe 2008:91) that Achebe translates into English in brackets, e.g. (the one that uses its tale to drive flies away). "The one" as a person does not correspond to "its tail" as such reference is made to an animal. Nevertheless, in the novel, Igbo understands because everyone abandons whatever he/she is doing and hurries in the direction of the voice uttering the proverb, indicating that the proverb is used to gather or *pitso*. Therefore, it is the practice of the Igbo to use this proverb to establish a gathering.

### **5.3.2 Similar food preparation and chores defining Sotho roles as adults**

After the initiates have completed their training at the initiation school, they are seen as adults and become involved in the preparation of food and everyday chores. The discussion below shows that preparation of food and chores are similar among the Sotho groups.

### 5.3.2.1 Sotho groups food preparation

The Sotho are generous with food. They mention that *dijo ke tshila tsa/ya meno* (food is the dirt of teeth/ do not dare not to give others food). Other proverbs are *bitla la kgomo ke molomo* (when the cow is dead, it is eaten), the neighbours must take some portions of the meat home. Furthermore *Dijo di jewa ka baeti* (when there are visitors you have to find a way to provide decent food). It is the tradition amongst the Sotho to offer food to visitors. When one takes a journey, one is also offered provision.

The Sotho had a particular field called *tshimo ya dira* (a foes' field) that was under the chieftaincy's care. All the villagers took care of it (c.f. Breautz, 1991). Those who did not have food or fields due to poverty or some calamity, would be given food from this field by the governance of the village and the chief. No one was allowed to go hungry amongst the Sotho.

Khaketla's *Mosali eo o 'Neileng Eena* (1954) writes about the food available amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho). In the drama, the characters, Tseleng and Thato, tell the folktale about Basotho (Southern Sotho) girls who collect firewood and pick wild vegetables. Tseleng prepares mealie meal on a grinding stone. *Nkgono* (grandmother) Nthibisi is also preparing sorghum beer (*jwala*). The Batswana call it *bojalwa* without deleting the prefix *bo-* like the Basotho (Southern Sotho). The dish is also prepared with *qhubu* (boiled grains) but is made with maize in the play *Mosali eo u 'Neileng Eena*. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) make the dish using maize, which the Sotho groups acquired from the Western world, but the majority of the Sotho make the dish with *dikgobe*, (boiled grains), which appears in the riddle among the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi. The Sotho used to eat this dish as they were thrashing grains from the fields. One form of it was also made from beans (*linawa*) and sorghum (*mabele*).

The Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi have the following riddle to describe their cooking:

Sepedi:        Baloi ba bina ka legageng ba kgahla dingaka  
[witches are singing in the cave]

Answer: Dikgobe (boiled grains)

Sesotho: Baloi ba qabana/bina ka lehaheng

[Witches are fighting/ singing in the cave]

Answer: Dikgobe (boiled grains)

The above dish, discussed in the form of a riddle in the above example in Sepedi and Sesotho, is also expressed as an idiomatic expression (*maele*) in Setswana *go apaya dikgobe* (c.f. Sebate 2011:48), (to have parted lips in anticipation of crying). This perhaps explains the process of the soft opening of grains as they cook. The Sotho could shift the same concept and practice in various forms of a narrative to express their Sotho outlook and experiences.

Traditional sorghum drinks, like *seqhaqhabola* and *motoho*, also demonstrate the Sotho lifestyle among the Basotho (Southern Sotho). The Batswana have *ting* and the Bapedi have *motepo*. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) have a form of beer that they call *leting*, with a variation of a prefix compared to the Batswana sorghum drink *ting*. *Bohobe* is also prepared either from maize, which is quite a new food to the Sotho, or their original plant sorghum - *mabele*. While the Batswana and Bapedi still use this term, the Basotho (Southern Sotho) have decided to call it *papa*, from the Afrikaans *pap* (porridge). The Basotho (Southern Sotho) shifted the name of the stiff porridge dish from *bohobe* to *papa* in order to mark the arrival and life among the Afrikaners. *Bohobe* now recedes in their memory.

Basotho (Southern Sotho) have transferred the name to a wheat dish that the English people call bread. This dish is now *bohobe* in Sesotho. On the other hand, the Batswana and Bapedi have decided to adopt the name "bread" into the Sotho language and call it *borotho*, indicating that it is a new dish adopted from the British or the English. However the Sotho still mutually understand each other and their way of doing things, e.g. cooking, despite the shift of terms caused by their environment and being influenced by the practices of others whom they meet.

When the Basotho (Southern Sotho) adopted the word *papa* from the Afrikaans word *pap* as an additional word to refer to their traditional staple dish *bohobe*, the word did not change in Setswana and Sepedi. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) still have a mutual understanding of their



broad vocabulary and its relationship with other words that were added for the broader conception of a staple food. The Sesotho prepare and call samp made from maize *bohojana masatswana* meaning *bohobe* made with little bones.

The traditional sorghum drink has a variety of names, i.e. *motoho* amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho), *ting* amongst the Batswana, and *motepo* amongst the Bapedi. The Sotho also prepare sorghum beer, boiled grain dishes, milk preparation of dishes, and a staple dish called *bohobe* as having a connection with the word *bohobe* from sorghum; these days they also replace sorghum with maize in some of their similar dishes like *bohobe*. In this way, the Sotho are building new walls on an old foundation that shows their same origin. The Sotho groups have similar cooking methods although the dish may have different references across the Sotho groups.

The serving of *bohobe* is in the form of *dipolokwe* in Sesotho or *makaku* in Sepedi. These are little round ball servings made manageable for one to bite *papa/bohobe*. There is also *morogo* or *moroho* amongst the three groups– the variation of the same word meaning a vegetables dish. The women or girls go out to gather wild vegetables in the veld. Other chores for women and girls under the tutelage of female elders are grinding grains such as mealies, sorghum or wheat on the traditional grinding stone. Women also sometimes make fire for the homestead and refine a sorghum mixture for *motoho* on the grinding stone– *ho nepola*, which is *mphoya* in Sepedi.

The Sotho eat similar foods and share similar dishes and ceremonies involving food. Basotho (Southern Sotho) share *phabadimo* (~*mpha-badimo*), a "thanks giving or reparation offering" (Manyeli & Machobane, 2001:87; Sebate, 2011:120-121). Sebate adds that the Batswana call it *mokete wa Badimo*. A person in this kind of celebration would like to thank the ancestors for his/her success or would like to ask for help or forgiveness from the high being through the ancestors. The central food is a slaughtered animal, e.g. a cow or sheep (c.f. Manyeli & Machobane, 2001:87) and sorghum drinks and beer are served. Manyeli and Machobane (2001) see the *pha-badimo* as a tradition practised amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho). SABC 1 screened the *pha-badimo* celebration amongst the Bapedi during a programme called *Roots* (21/1/2015).

A Mopedi man connected the *pha-badimo* to a modern lifestyle when he won R100 000.00 in the Mageu Competition. The Mopedi man combined the thanksgiving ceremony with his wife's birthday celebration. *Mageu* or *mahleu* is a Sotho traditional dish now sold by modern companies and enjoyed amongst the three Sotho groups. This is another way of Sotho practices reinventing themselves.

Howuker and Hollington (2007:331) contend that people of the same origin have the same sense of attachment amongst themselves. In this case their social dimension testifies that they have the same attachment to *mokete wa badimo~ pha-badimo~ mpha-badimo* as a way of connecting to the ancestors. They use similar ingredients, utensils and methods of cooking in the preparation for *pha-badimo*. By the ceremony remaining the same across the Sotho groups and connecting it (*phabadimo*) to a modern lifestyle like the Mopedi man above, it remains true to the traditional identity of the people, i.e. it does not die according to the primordial theory of ethnicity (Cashmore, 2003:143). It can be modelled according to modern times, as it remains present. The varieties that ensued amongst the Sotho are remodelled on the same tradition to suit the circumstances that the Basotho/Sotho find themselves.

The Bapedi express a *pha-badimo* in the full sentence *mpho ya badimo*, not in a contracted form as amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho), while the Batswana call it *mokete wa Badimo*, (giving thanks to God and the ancestors). The same collective attitudes amongst the Sotho, such as celebrating success through *pha-badimo* can easily be described and recognised amongst the three groups.

The above example leaves no question as to their similar origin. An animal had to be slaughtered and cooked and the traditional Sotho beer had to be prepared and served according to Sotho custom. Some beer with some meat was poured onto the ground for the ancestors. Sebate (2011:120-121) gives a similar discussion of *mokete wa badimo* amongst the Batswana. Before serving, the man mentioned that he is giving thanks to his ancestors for winning the competition. The Sotho even share the proverb reflecting the conjoinment of the ancestors to the people, *pha-badimo o ja le bona* (C.f. Sekese, 2011:110 & 227). They believe that visitors represent the ancestors, thus you have to treat them well by giving them food.

### 5.3.2.2 Other chores amongst Sotho groups

Apart from food preparation, other chores show similarity between the Sotho. The collection and recognition of Sotho chores show as similar division of the same labour amongst the Sotho groups. Women smear floors and walls, draw *ditema*, go to the river to wash (*ho ya nokaneng*) the household's clothes, go to the well or spring to collect water for cooking, collect firewood and other items, e.g. cow dung from the kraal (*disu*), to make fire. Sometimes they apply some traditional technology in the making and keeping of items that make a fire.

Sotho men have similar chores across the group. They go to *letsholo* ~ *tsholo* (go hunting), look after animals at the cattle posts (*ho ya motebong*) – Breutz (1991) mentions that the Sotho groups used to share the grazing land and the practice promoted the similar hunting tradition and *metebo* (cattle posts) amongst the Sotho – and oversee agriculture, war and governance. Daily they go to the *Kgotla* (traditional court) if they are at home, to decide on policies of governance and to sit over courtcases and other issues that need collective solutions with regard to the leadership of the society. The above three terms and practices are similar amongst the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) and show that the three groups have similar activities as men.

The Sotho do not appreciate a person who abandons his/ her cultural practices, which is something that is becoming increasingly common due to urbanisation and industrial activity. Amongst the Southern Sotho, they call such a person *lekgolwa*, as s/he has abandoned the community's role and traditions preferring the city's enjoyment. Though it is a recent term, it is surprising that this outlook is shared amongst the three groups of the Sotho even though they developed into separate groups. Batswana and Bapedi also use the similar word *lekgolwa* (c.f. Breutz 1991:50). The Sotho groups seem to develop together socially even in contemporary times due to their original outlook. Other incidences are the development of similar modern oral narratives such as riddles to describe their experiences.

One can compare the following Setswana riddle (Sebate, 2011:66) and Sesotho riddle (Segoete, 2015:33):

Setswana: Monna yo e reng a sena go ja a re, nxa!

[A man who after finishing eating says, *nxa*!]

Thipana ya mokopelo

[A folded knife ]

Sesotho: Monna eo e reng ha a qeta ho ja a re nxa!

[A man who after finishing eating says *nxa*!]

[A knife (as it folds)]

Thipa (ha e kopetswa)

A knife is described as a relatively new utensil amongst the Sotho but they have managed to form a similar riddle even though they now form different Sotho groups. The Sotho groups now use a modern knife to slaughter an animal for their traditional ceremonies. Modern objects can be used and accommodated to perform old traditions, hence the new description of a modern Sotho lifestyle in Sotho folklore, which shows that the Sotho come from the same origin.

#### **5.4 Similarity of Sotho groups marriage practices**

This section discusses marriage as the third human stage to establish the social similarity among the Sotho groups. The analysis below shows that the Sotho groups have comparable marriage practices. In an interview, Moeketsi Lesitsi (pers com 2013) has the following to say about Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi marriages:

...we look at all these areas [human stages] as they are; we find that they are the same. One, let me give you an example, all of us use cows to marry. When we marry ..., the two families are joined together....

The above response explains that Sotho marriage negotiations are based on cows and the two families unite to form one people. This means the Sotho groups view marriage in the same way.

The similar vocabulary of the three Sotho groups related to marriage issues shows that the Sotho also promote similar practices in marriage to show that they were once one people. They have *mme/ ntate Matsale* (mother/father in law) in Sesotho with a variation *matswale* and *ratsale* amongst the Bapedi and Batswana respectively. They acknowledge and protect intermarriage between individuals across the lineages in their communities. The Sotho groups share the proverb *ngwan'a malome nnyale, kgomo di boele sakeng* (the child of my maternal uncle, marry me, cows should go back to the kraal) and have turned it into the popular song:

Ngwan'a malome nnyale, ngwan'a malome nnyale  
 [Child of my maternal uncle marry me]  
 Ngwan'a malome ke motswala, kgomo di boele sakeng  
 [Child of my uncle is my cousin; cows should go back to the kraal]  
 Ke di bone di kgoroga  
 [I saw the coming back from grazing]  
 [Ke di bone di kgoroga]  
 [I saw them coming back from grazing]  
 Di thuntshitse marole  
 [They were in a hurry from the veld]  
 Kgomo di boele sakeng  
 The cows should go back to the kraal

Breutz (1991:79- 80) mentions that the marriage of cross cousins that is being enunciated in the above song occurs amongst the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi. The Bapedi reiterate the above proverb amongst the Sotho as *ngwana wa rrangwane nyale kgomo di boele shakang*, (marry at your father's younger brother's place so that the cows remain in the kraal) (Cf. Breutz, 1991:80; Makopo, 1993:19).

There is evidence that the Sotho groups would like to cement blood relations amongst the Sotho. The following interview with Dr Reenyane Dikole (pers com 2012), a lecturer in the Department

of African Languages in Botswana, mentions that the Sotho's similar outlook causes them to marry:

During the time when we had UBLS [University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland], we [Batswana] were closer to Basotho [Southern Sotho] than Swazis.... There was a lot of mutual understanding. Our students who attended the university in Lesotho married the Basotho [Southern Sotho], because culturally we are the same. Quite a number of people have wives from Lesotho and husbands from Botswana.

Chief Mathealira Seeiso<sup>23</sup>, the principal chief of Mokhotlong district in Lesotho, a younger brother to his majesty Moshoeshoe II (Bereng Seeiso), and an uncle to His Majesty King Letsie III (Mohato Seeiso), observes a similar situation across the two groups with regard to Sotho marriage:

We love Botswana and Batswana as our younger brothers. When we put Seepapitso's son to the chieftaincy at Botswana, I was sent by His Majesty King Letsie III. With other previous chiefs [in Botswana] it was his majesty Moshoeshoe II. Seepapitso grew up here just outside Lesotho, here at Thaba Nchu. Then he fell in love with one of the most beautiful ladies, known for her beauty. That girl is from Lesotho. She is from Maseru. Her parents taught together with Mme 'Masechele Khaketla at Lesotho High School.

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<sup>23</sup>Chief Mathealira Seeiso is also a Senate Council member in Lesotho.

Chief Mathealira Seeiso mentions that when there is a marriage in another group, they get involved as Bakuena, especially when the marriage happens amongst the Bahurutse/ Bakuena tribe, as in the case above between the Bahurutse and Bakuena tribes in Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana respectively. Chief Mathealira attests to Dr Dikole's observation at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS), that the Sotho groups understand each other's culture to the extent that they intermarry. There are closer diplomatic ties that include the observation of culture across the Sotho groups.

A young man from a Botswana chieftaincy is related to the Bahurutse lineage in Thaba Nchu and while he is in Thaba Nchu marries a young lady from nearby Maseru in Lesotho across the border. The Sotho practice of marriage amongst them seems to discount the boundaries between Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana. The Sotho proverb *tlhare sa hole se tjhekwa mohla letsholo* (a young woman from a far place is considered for marriage on an occasional visit) indicates that it is even appropriate to consider intermarriage across the Sotho polities from afar. The verbatim variation of the similar proverb in Setswana is: *Setlharesagole se etjwamotlha wa letsholo*, with the similar words and sentence as the Sesotho above, except the use of *etjwa* for *tjhekwa* that is also a word used in Sesotho, exchangeably with *tjhekwa* everyday.

A popular local soapy called *Generations* (2 March, 2015) on SABC 1 enacts a Batswana family negotiating *lobola*. After the negotiations, the elderly uncles marvel at the figure of one of their daughter-in-law's sisters. Instead of saying that the girl has a perfect figure, they say *o na le dithupa tse ntle tsa go aha mok'huk'hu* (she has good sticks for building a shack).

A variation of the proverb is *a! thupa tse ntle tsa ho ahela morena motlotloane* (wow! Good sticks for building a traditional house for the king) in Sesotho. Another proper way of saying the proverb in Setswana is *Mosetsana wa thupatsamaretlwa* (A maiden with elegantly firm and beautiful sticks).

This variation above is caused by the current environment, i.e. the expression refers to a Sotho house as *mok'huk'hu* by one group due to the change brought by industrialism and another group

retains the original form of the similar proverb. However, this is at face value, as the groups' interpretation of their similar proverbs still asserts the same practice.

The Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi refer to marriage by the same term *lenyalo*. Sekese (2011:3-8), Sebate (2011:117-119) and Monnig (1967:129-137) amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi, respectively, narrate the similar procedures of a Sotho traditional marriage. Marriage begins with courtship and betrothal that sometimes might be initiated by the young men and women. At other times, the parents initiate it when the children are still young. In the case where the children are still small, the procedure is called *tebeletso* among the Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) and its variation *ho lebelela* among the Batswana. The boy's parents send a cow to the girl's family as a form of early betrothal so that other families cannot ask for that particular girl's hand in marriage when she is old enough to be married.

The Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) say *o sa nkue* (she is taken) and the Batswana say *o hlongwe lehlokwa* (she is marked for engagement). *Ho hlongwa lehlokwa* is an idiomatic expression meaning *go beelela ngwananyana hore o tle o mo nyale* (c.f. Sebate 2011:48) which means to ask a girl's hand in marriage. Monnig (1967) and Sekese (2011) explain the similar practice between the Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) respectively. Basotho (Southern Sotho) mention it as *ho beheletsa*, which is a variation of Setswana *go beelela*. There is an exchange of favours between the families as children grow up, to the extent that the children themselves visit the households of the prospective in-laws without knowing that there is a marriage agreement set for them by the parents.

When a young man wants to marry, the Sotho groups send a young man's relative as a messenger, *ho qela mohope wa metsi* in Sesotho, *go kgopela sego sa metse* in Sepedi, and *go kopa sego sa metsi* in Setswana (ask for a calabash of water). These idioms all mean to ask a girl's hand in marriage. The Bapedi have a special term for the man sent to ask for girl's hand in marriage, *motseta*, which is other word for *morumua* (messenger) commonly used among the Bapedi. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) use *morumua* (a messenger), the term present in the languages of all the three groups.



The three groups of the Sotho call the whole process of asking for a girl's hand in marriage *patlo~ho batla* (to look for). The parents and relatives of the girl call her and ask her in front of the visitors from the boy's family whether she knows the young man mentioned by the visitors. If the girl admits that she knows him, the agreement between the two families is sealed with a cow brought by the young man's family. This cow is slaughtered at the girl's home and prepared for a small feast. Some fat from this animal is smeared on the boy's relative to show that a marriage agreement has been sealed.

The Batswana and Bapedi use the word *bogadi* while the Basotho (Southern Sotho) use the word *bohadi* to describe the practice of bringing cows to the future bride's home (the number of cows is agreed upon by the two families). The only difference between the two words is the phonological variation of [g] ~ [h].

When the girl goes to the husband's home, she presents gifts in exchange for the *bogadi* ~ *bohadi*. In the folktale *Mosimodi le Mosimotsana* that is similar across the three groups, the process of a Sotho marriage is narrated. The gifts *ho phahlela* or *phahlo* that are exchanged are in the form of straw mats, pots, gourds, blankets, beads and clothing such as dresses, which are items that the couple will need to begin their married life.

*Bogadi~bohadi* entitles the young man's parents among the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) to the guardianship of the future bride and her ability to have children, who then belong in the husband's home. Hence, the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) have the proverb that says *ngwana ke wa dikgomo* (the child is owned by its paternal side through the *bohadi*).

Traditionally a man can have more than one wife although the practice is no longer favoured amongst the Sotho. Reverend Roland<sup>24</sup> (1868) in the *Basutoland Records* observes that each wife has her own house and home:

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<sup>24</sup> Part I is found in Basutoland Records at Lesotho National Archives. Reverend Roland also had a Master at the time.

A man marries more wives and there are gardens (*makgwakgwa*), the Bapedi call *lapa*, which is a term that Basotho have contemporarily adopted as *lelapa* meaning a house and a garden around it. The wife and her children do their daily activities. Boys herd cattle. The children also help with the gardening and other household chores. This context promotes wealth of the man or chief's homestead. The food is abundant and it is easy to exercise hospitality. Visitors of the chief or a man in possession of wealth can also offer his wives to the visitors. Children born from such an encounter belong to the chief or the man in possession of wealth.

The proverb *ngwana ke wa dikgomo* therefore has another context. The child born from the wife of a man through a different affair is also the child of that woman's husband as she is still married to the man. The husband has every right over the child, while the biological father cannot claim to be the father of such a child. This is because the *lobola* was finalised between the families of the wife and the husband's families. The wife or her family can also not claim the child. The child's partenal line is that of his or her mother's husband.

Moshoeshe I had approximately one hundred wives (Couzins, 2005). In the historical narrative, *History ea Basotho* and Chief Moletsane's praise poem, there is a narrative that chief Moletsane of the Bataung had 40 wives (Mangoela, 2013; Moletsane et al., 2000: 15-17). Chief Moletsane married seven more wives because some of his 33 wives either died or could not have children. In Sesotho, the practice is called *seyantlo* (how another wife comes to help the others through difficulties in marriage). Sometimes the senior wife of the chief might choose her sister to help her in the marriage. 'Mamohato and her sisters, 'Masekhonyana (Mabela) and 'Mantsane were married to Moshoeshe (Ellenberger, 1997:361).

## **5.5 Similarity in Sotho groups treatment of death practices**

The fourth life stage amongst the Sotho groups is the treatment of death. Some participants show that the fundamental ways in the handling of death amongst the Sotho groups is similar.

Dr LS Molema (pers com 2012) said that the Sotho have a similar traditional hymn for people affected by death embodied in their oral literature.

*Starting with oral literature, ho na le poeme ya Sesotho mono, translated into English which was collected by baruti ba Moshoeshoe, bane ba ntlha. Ha ke re they came in 1883 ko Lesotho?...And then Jacottet is the one who collected this poem in 1836...We call it the song of the afflicted...It appears in at least three versions of it that I know. It appears in the collection of poetry...It's an anthology, we used to teach it here [University of Botswana]. It's long out of print. And it occurs there as "Lament of a Warrior", ya ga [that of Jacottet] is a "Song of the Afflicted". And then there is a passage of it in Mofolo's Moeti oa Bochabela...*

According to the above interview, the Sesotho poem, *Lament for a Warrior* in Setswana appears as the *Song of the Afflicted* in Sesotho. It also appears in Thomas Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela* and Jaccotet's *Travels in Lesotho* (1886) written in French. This means that the Sotho groups co-own a dirge and have similar ways of mourning the dead. The poem was taught as part of Setswana at the University of Botswana to show the similarity in the way of life amongst the Sotho groups.

Dr Molema (pers com 2012) adds that the Sotho groups have created the dirge or song in the form of a hymn as a way of dealing with their sorrow of missing the departed one through death:

It's traditional... and it is part of the ritual, actually *ya batho ha ba shwetswe, ba lela, ba llela* the beloved one. And so you get things like, "are they really gone?" in the English version, "are they gone, is he gone or is she gone?... What occurs in all of them is some version of "can't the rope descend from heaven, so I can climb up and go to where they are?"

in rhetorical questions. All of them have that in common, but they are versions of the same poem, the same oral poem...

According to the above interview, it is a song known to all the Sotho groups with only one interpretation in English. It indicates that the Sotho have the same outlook with regard to death, i.e. that death is an experience of life. Dr Molema further says the Sotho cry for their loved ones when they are dead, “*ba ya lela, ba llela* the beloved one” meaning ‘they cry and they cry for the beloved one’, shows that they have a similar form of crying as an art and their crying is accompanied by a dirge. *Lela* in Sepedi and Setswana is a variation of *lla* in Sesotho indicating that although they might not be together, the different Sotho groups show the same origin by having similar practices.

The above participant's response also shows she is able to construct an English translation for the song of the afflicted that is sung in Sesotho, Sepedi and Setswana:

Are they really gone?  
Is he/she really gone?  
Can't a rope descend from heaven?  
So that I can climb up and go to where they are?

Co-owning of the similar dirge, even though the people are no longer together, shows the similar origin of the Sotho.

The participant translates the words in English with the same meaning and expressions to show that the Sotho have a similar origin, though the song might have a version in Setswana, Sesotho or Sepedi, which are varieties of the Sotho language. The Sotho believe that their beloved ones do not die but retire to a special place after death, hence the repetition of the rhetoric question, "are they really gone?" and the idea that a rope can come down from heaven and help the living to climb up to where the deceased are situated in heaven. This notion brings about celebrations like *mokete wa Badimo* as explained in the preparation of their food above.

The similarity of a dirge indicates that the Sotho groups also have similar ways of handling the burial. When asked whether the Sotho groups, especially the Bafokeng, Bakuena and Bataung lineages, can be considered as one people or are so divided that they can be considered separate entities, Moeketsi Lesitsi (pers com 2013) gives an account of the similar way the Sotho handle death in the following interview:

All these nations you have mentioned ...We make the deceased face east, and if you can make the person face somewhere else, they can kill you. So they respect the deceased more than the living one. If you can pass in an uncereemonious manner near the deceased, you will see them whispering to each other, "Have you seen how badly s/he has passed near the deceased? S/he begins to make us doubtful. There is something we might find. There is a problem with this person". ... We are together in the same procedures....

The above participant explains the similarity of the Sotho in general with regard to the treatment of death and the main cultural procedures that are shared amongst the Sotho groups. The Sotho have a particular respect for the deceased, certain taboos must be observed, e.g. the deceased has to face east. He says there are common social practices amongst the same lineage in Batswana, Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho), which shows that the Sotho were together.

The participant mentions the Sotho lineages, i.e. Bapedi, Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) Bafokeng, Bataung and Bakuena amongst the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) as nations. A nation here is a collective of people in the same community. The Sotho people seem to have the same origin, as they practice the same procedures with regard to their way of life, although they have different collectives (communities), where there is a major community in the form of a group and sub-community in the form of a lineage.

Moeketsi Lesitsi (pers com 2013) continues to discuss the oneness of the Sotho and talks about the procedures followed amongst the Sotho in their treatment of death. He mentions that a cow is very important in the general burial procedures with regard to the entire Sotho groups:

The cow is slaughtered for the deceased early in the morning. In all these nations it is the same ... Now that the person has passed away, we look at how we send him off ... So the question, "We thought that this person wants a blanket? Is it supposed to be a particular blanket? We can slaughter any cow". So I say, "No. You do not slaughter any cow. If it is a female person, we slaughter a female cow. When it is a male person, we slaughter a male cow... Apart from that we need to change it"....

According to Moeketsi Lesitsi (pers com 2013), a cow is slaughtered according to the sex of the deceased. The Sotho groups seem to be particular about the way the gender of a person is expressed. The issue of gender is observed when the Sotho is born, as he/she grows up, in marriage and even in the celebration of a Sotho life after his/her passing.

One of the fundamental cultures that is similar amongst the Sotho groups is how they prepare the deceased for burial. Moeketsi Lesitsi (pers com 2013) continues his discussion and shows that the cowhide of a slaughtered cow is very important in this case to show the Sotho groups similar origin.

The issue is what we do with the cowhide. As I said, I am discussing the procedures of culture where we are the same. You make the deceased wear the cowhide while it is still wet and with blood. Then you fasten [it] with a *modi* rope, like you always hear people say, "*re ithwetse medi hloohong* [we are wearing a *modi* band on our head]"It is a sign of tears that run down our cheek...

The deceased, amongst the Sotho, is wrapped with the hide of the slaughtered cow that is fastened with a special grass (*modi*), hence the Sotho proverb *o ithwetse medi hloohong* (s/he is wearing a *modi* grass band around the head), meaning s/he is bereaved.

A variation is evident even at the smallest structure of the community in the lineage. However, it is a variation in the Sotho style of doing the same practice, a ritual, not a different way of Sotho life. The Tlokwa lineage in Botswana that still has a strong jurisdiction over its village shows an additional Batlokwa characteristic regarding death as a passage of right according to the interview below. The Batlokwa fortress amongst the Southern Sotho was destroyed during the colonial wars and fights with the nearby chiefs Moshoeshoe and Moletsane (c.f. Couzins 2005; Ellenberger 1997; Mangoaela, 2013).

During the interview, Ratokelo Nkoka (pers com 2013) mentions the following variant of the Batlokwa lineage with regard to the ritual of death:

When you arrive in Botswana, you won't find a tomb at Tlokoeng... Inside the house, you will find that the house is well decorated with modern things like [a] mat on the floor, the Batlokoa relatives who have passed on are beneath the floor.

The burial of the Batlokoa lineage members is inside the house at Botswana, according to their ritual. Lewellen (2003), Hoebel (1966) and Bahta (2014:176) describe rituals as a materialization of a certain way of life for a particular purpose. While still observing the major social burial practice of the Sotho, the Batlokoa vary the practice by changing the place where a person is buried. The styles of various lineages or clans of the Sotho in implementing the Sotho way of life might not be the same but the fundamentals of the way of life are similar for all the Sotho.

Another variation of where a person is to be buried, but with the same Sotho procedures described above, is found among the Bapedi who bury adolescent boys and girls of less status in the *mafuri* (private courtyard) behind the hut. Young children are buried underneath the loft of the hut. The burial also takes place in the kraal where a special entrance is made for this occasion at

the back of the kraal to allow women to attend the burial, as they are normally not allowed to enter the kraal, and to protect the cattle from diseases. Monnig (1967: v-x&167:139), describes the Bapedi emanating from the Bakgatla lineage as the lineage that kept other Sotho lineages together in their jurisdiction.

The Basotho (Southern Sotho) sometimes dig a grave for the deceased in the kraal. The kraal is destroyed and then rebuilt after the burial (Segoete, 2015: 05). At other times the deceased is buried in the *ng`alo ya mabitla* (graveyard). While certain burial styles may overlap, as in the case of the Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho), the procedures remain the same throughout the Sotho groups.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the social dimension of the Sotho to establish whether the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana have the same origin. The chapter finds that the Sotho have a similar fundamental social organisation. The term "social" in the chapter means when one relates to activities where one meets and spends time with others. It is based on how the Sotho across the groups interact with each other in their respective societal settings.

The chapter has shown that the likeness of the Sotho is in their similar practices with regard to their lifecycles, i.e. from birth, growing up, becoming a man or a woman with initiation rites being the most significant practice, marriage and death.

The Sotho portray their way of life by creating folklore that explains and guides their experiences through their four life stages. Examples are their similar proverbs, folktales and riddles describe their way of life that emanates from the same origin. Their cultural values, types of work and its division such as cooking and taking cows to the veld are also similar amongst the Sotho groups.

The chapter addressed the similar practices of birth attendants that the Sotho groups portray through their similar folktales and idiomatic expressions, looked at the seclusion period with regard to taking care of the nursing mother and child, and discussed how the child is prepared to mix with the society. The chapter analyses the *lebollo* (initiation school) amongst the Bapedi,



Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) as salient in teaching young men and women about their roles of providing and taking care of the family and society. Furthermore, the chapter discussed similar cultural practices such as *bohali* in marriage amongst the Sotho. The final section discussed the importance of slaughtering a cow and the burial processes amongst the Sotho.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **POLITICAL SIMILARITY OF THE SOTHO**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The two previous chapters discussed the similarity between the Sotho culture and social practices with regard to the aim of the thesis, which is to understand the cultural, social and political similarities of the Bafokeng, Bakuena and Bataung lineages amongst the Sotho in order to establish the oneness of the Sotho groups. This chapter intends to discuss the political similarities among the Sotho groups. The political angle to this thesis is related to governance and how the Sotho deal with power in their leadership.

The chapter will show that Sotho groups have similar ways of governance; their traditional kraals of council are similar in function and political practice, e.g. the Sotho use a similar council of proverbs and idioms to show how discussions regarding ruling, etc. are held at the *kgotla*. The proverbs differ only in vocabulary, e.g. (the chief's voice is final) as in: *Lentswe la morena le haelwa lesaka* (Sesotho) ~ *lentšu la Kgoši le agelwa morako* (Sepedi) ~ *Kgosi kekgosikamorafe* (Setswana). The tradition of their public discussions is similar in the form of *pitso*. By sometimes consulting with each other, the three Sotho groups maintain their Sotho identity and self-determination that conserves their traditions.

#### **6.2 The village as the smallest unit and its role in political relations**

The following section discusses that the Sotho are similar in that they have villages as their smallest political units. The chief is responsible for taking care of the people's needs such as food, coordination of work such as *letsholo* (hunting expedition) and arbitration of law. In return, the people are responsible for the welfare of the chief and maintain the institution of chieftaincy at the local level, e.g. they hunt for the chief's family and see that the chief has chieftaincy clothes. The section also shows that people are not obliged to stay with a chief who does not perform his duties. They are free to join or form another community.

### 6.2.1 Sotho clan or lineage as the smallest political unit across the Sotho groups

The present section will discuss the leadership structure of the smallest Sotho community, i.e. the clan. The thesis will look into the similarity between a clans' leadership structure amongst the Sotho groups and will show that the clan is an important political structure at a local level of a Sotho group's implementation with regard to allocation of resources and governance of individual members of the group.

The following interview with \*Molato Tshepiso (pers com 2016)<sup>25</sup>, a member of the local chieftaincy of Bopedi in the Republic of South Africa, shows some of the ways Sotho allocation of resources at a local level is guaranteed:

Sotho traditional communities are good, it just depends how the chief handles the people. If [I go to Lesotho or Botswana] I will find that they are good just like in Bopedi. Some few chiefs have passed on in my village, but the present one still treats us well according to Sotho tradition. When you starve in the village and are poor at your home, the chief rations you some food. He takes a dish and gives food the way he can.

The above interview shows that the local chief has food that is kept at his homestead for community members; if there are calamities such as hunger in families, he has to ration this food. In a local village, it is important to see that every member of the community has human necessities, such as food. As the above interview shows, the Sotho appreciate it when the chief treats them well and to show their appreciation they have created the proverb *Morena ke Morena ka Setjhaba* (a chief is a chief by the people). This proverb exists across the Sotho groups.

People of the village collectively help the chief to secure their necessities, as per the proverb, of *morena ke morena ka batho* (A chief is a chief by the grace of his tribe ). The Basotho (Southern

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<sup>25</sup> Asterik means it is not his real name but is a protection. \*Molato is of a chieftaincy family in his village in Bopedi, although he is not a chief. He also went to initiation school (*lebollo*).

Sotho) Chief Joel Bolokoe Motšoene<sup>26</sup> (pers com 2013) says the following on the issue of collaboration in securing the people's needs at the Sotho village level:

Some are the issues of securing what one has to wear. Actually, the Sotho were people who used animal skins for clothing. Let me make example with their chiefs. The community goes to hunt for game. If they kill a big animal, it is taken to the chief [at *kgotla*]. The society makes blankets for the chief out of the skin of this animal.

The above quotation reveals that the Basotho do not only hunt for game, they also hunt to observe a custom related to chieftaincy, i.e. if they kill a big animal, it is brought to the chief's kraal and they use the hide to make a blanket for the chief.

The Sotho people in the village do not only look for food together as a community according to Chief Joel Motšoene, they also look for resources to make clothes. In addition as much as the chief is responsible for providing for the needs of the people, the people also carry the responsibility of looking after their chief. This is according to the saying *morena ke morena ka setjhaba* (a chief is a chief by the grace of his tribe). They make special clothes for the chief and a blanket from the hide of a big animal.

The Sotho proverb *Phiri e jewa moreneng* (A hyena is eaten at the chief's kraal) explains the context of hunting as a political expedition. The people consider the chief, as they hunt to provide for him and bring the best game and animal hides to him. They are proud of him as he serves them well. Sekese (2011:158) explains the aforementioned discussion of the chief who provides and serves his community well in the historical context of the proverb *phiri e jewa moreneng* (A hyena is eaten at the chief's place). The people feel satisfaction and pleasure because the chief does good things to them. They in return praise him and elevate his status by serving him. Sekese (2011:158) gives the following oral narrative of the proverb.

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<sup>26</sup> Chief Joel Bolokoe Motšoene is the principal chief of Leribe district in Lesotho. He is also a member of Lesotho Senate Council. A senate is a council of a country's national chiefs' representation.

Ho Basotho ba khale, ea bolaeang phiri, kapa tau, leha e le nkoe le tse ling tsa mofuta o nang le kotsi ho batho, e ne e ka khona a e ise moreneng, moo a tla hlapisoa joale ka hoja o bolaile motho ntoeng. Peisong ha li ka hloloa ke ea moreneng, eba ho etsoa tlatse ho thoe *phiri e joa moreneng!* Tsa metsaneng li ne li keke tsa hlola tsa moreneng. Libata tse bohale ha li jeoe metsaneng, li isoa moreneng, li e'o jeoa teng.

[The Basotho in the past, would kill a hyena, or a lion, even a cheetah and others. These kind of animals are fearful to people, as a result they would be taken to the chief's place, where the person would be rewarded as if he has killed an enemy at war. Where there is a race contest, if a horse (or a bull) from the chieftaincy family wins, people shout accolades and say, *A hyena is eaten at the chief's place!* Those from the small families would not win the race like those from the chief's family. The big and dangerous animals are taken to the chief's place as they should not be eaten by small family alone.]

In the proverb (*phiri e joa moreneng*) above a person who has killed this powerful, dangerous animal, e.g. a leopard, hyena or lion, has to take it to the chief's place. The chief through his authority bestowed to him by the community places the person who hunted this big animal in the same category of a warrior who has gone to war and won a battle. The person is a warrior and he has participated in sparing the people's lives by killing an animal that would have otherwise killed more people and animals in the community. Furthermore, the person has more power and war techtics.

The chief shows his duties by giving accolades where they are due in his community like rewarding a worrior, as in the case above, but he also punishes where punishment is due. His duties to his people elevate his status. The person who does not obey the law in relation to other

community members has to pay for his/ her misdeeds. The Sotho have some proverbs to council the obedience of the law. Examples are when a Sotho community abhors theft as in *leshodu ke ntja le lefa ka hlooho ya lona* (a thief is a dog, s/he pays with his own head), (Mokitimi 1979:24) meaning it is hateful to be thief and one deserves the best of punishments. The reason might be that the Sotho communities are always considerate about the individual's needs in a society.

The Sotho groups further make an example with a thief in the arbitration of law by citing the following proverb *leshodu ke le tshwerweng* (the person found with a stolen thing may be accused). The Setswana version is *legodu le tshwarwakamorwalo*. In this proverb, they explain that the council at *kgotla* should be careful not to accuse a wrong person without evidence. There has to be evidence to every claim of wrong doing against the accused, so that people do not just blame others in the community.

\*Molato Tshepiso (pers com 2016) says the following about observation of the law at a village level:

We [Bapedi] are also having the leadership of *kgosi* (Sotho chieftaincy). For example, if you take a person to *lebollo* (the initiation school) by force, the chief will find you guilty. Then you might find that you do not have anything to pay the fine, while the chief says you should pay two cows.

Molato Tshepiso mentions that the Sotho chieftaincy system also applies to the Bapedi, e.g. if one takes a person to the *lebollo* (initiation school) by force, the traditional law mentions that a person has to pay two cows.

The Sotho groups like the payment with animals. The chapter entitled “Melao ya Marena” (Rules of the Chieftaincy) in Sekese (2011:29) says that the discussion of law enforcement have always been there through the rules. Sekese says

Mehleleng ya ho senyetsana ha Basotho ...ha e sale, likahlolo li ntse li etsetsoa masholu. Bona kahlolo ea Ramotjamane, e entsoeng ke Lethole mohla Ramotjamane a utsoitseng mabele a Moshoeshoe. Eaba Lethole o bokella *serei* sa marole a Ramotjamane, o a nea Moshoeshoe.

E ne e be eare Ramotjamane ha a ithoka a re:

“Ke thoa-thoa (ho roba) mofoka,

Ke oa mabele a Thesele (Moshoeshoe)!”

Le kajeno masholu a ntse a ahloloa ka litifiso. Ea utsoitseng poli o ntša e ’ngoe bakeng sa eo a e jeleng; ea bobeli ke kahlolo ea ho kena mohlapeng oa mong’a lipoli ka ntle ho tumello; ho thoe o buletse lesaka la motho. Mohlomong masholu a ee a amohuo tsa ’ona, e hle e be la rita, ke hore ha ba sa saletsoe ke letho.

[Indeed there has always been judgements ... even for thieves. Look at the judgement that was handed over to Ramotjamane, which was issued by Lethole when Ramotjamane stole Moshoeshoe’s sorghum. Lethole gathered a flock of Ramotjamane’s cows and gave them to Moshoeshoe. When Ramotjamane recites his praise poems, he says:

“I am thoa-thoa to break Mofoka [to break the law],

I am a person of Thesele’s [meaning Moshoeshoe] sorghum”

Even today thieves are made to pay. The one who has stolen a goat, pays

With another goat for the one he has stolen; second law is that if you go

by yourself to someone’s flock without permission; it is said that you

you have opened another person’s flock. Sometimes all the belongings of

the chief are taken and nothing remains. ]

Sekese (2011:29) above shows that the misdeeds of people are judged amongst the Basotho and the chief is involved. Chief Lethole of the Bakuena, who lived around the area of Clocolan, reprimanded Ramotjamane for stealing the young Thesele’s sorghum in the fields. The payment was a herd of Ramotjamane’s cows that Lethole gave to Moshoeshoe.

The interview from the Bapedi chieftaincy above explains the breakage of the law by using force on someone to do what she or he does not like. Furthermore there is an example of Sotho with regard to the way they deal with theft as an example amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho). These two examples show similarities in that the Sotho people use animals as a form of payment when someone has done wrong, and the local chief is at the centre to observe that the law is applied. The application of the law is also shown even by the oral literature such as the Sotho praise poems and proverbs.

Sekese (2011:29) quotes Ramotjamane's two lines of praise poems.

Ke thoa-thoa (ho roba) mofoka,  
Ke oa mabele a Thesele (Moshoeshoe)!  
(I am *thoa-thoa*! (ideophone showing to break) mofoka,  
I am one of Thesele's (Moshoeshoe) sorghum!)

The above lines embody the story of how Ramotjamane is sorry that he stole the cows of his own future chief Thesele and as a result broke the law. Further Sekese (2011) quotes the idiomatic expression that somebody has done wrong by taking law into one's hands when he retaliates by taking an animal from the person that owes him or her. The animal is supposed to be offered to him by the village members through the chief. The idiom is *Ho bulela lesaka* (to open for animals in the kraal) meaning to take animals from the kraal without permission. This is also equivalent to stealing (animals). The person who does not observe the law has to pay for his/ her misdeeds, as the above proverbs, praise poem, the narrative story of the Sotho arbitration of law and an interview show.

According to the village governance, the local chief attends to problems in the community, e.g. the rationing of food, the coordination of expeditions like the *letsholo*, overseeing proper social practices such as *lebollo*, and arbitrating at the local level. The abovementioned chief's role in the community is in accordance with the Sotho proverbs collected by Mokitimi (1997:31)



*Morena ke kgomo e tshitja* (a chief is a cow without horns). Sekese (2011:168) relates the similar proverb, “*morena ke khom’e chitja*” in the following manner:

Leha maoba le maobane [morena] a sa ka a o fa, ho se ke ha  
thoe o o hloile, hobane ka matsatsi a hlahlamang o tla o fa  
lijo tse ngata. Hape morena h’a na mokhoa o le mong oo a  
ka tsejoang hantle ka oona.

[Even though the chief did not give you anything, it is not  
because he does not like you because he might give you a  
plenty of food in the following days. Again he does not  
have only one way of operating with people.]

In other words a chief is not discriminatory, he serves everyone in the community equally and attends to the individual’s or community’s problems accordingly. If there is delay it is not with intention to hurt the member of his community like a bull with horns due to its power. This proverb resonates with the proverb *mmuso ha o tate* (the government does not hurry), meaning the government has bureaucracy, as a result other issues take a long time to complete in governance.

The chief’s expected non-discriminatory nature is also portrayed in other Sotho oral literature narratives. Even children are made aware through the game of riddles that the chieftaincy is the important institution expected to protect every member of the society including themselves. Moleleki (1993:30) explains that in the following riddle, *Sefate se dulwang ke nonyana tsohle* (a tree where all the birds live) with the answer *morena* (chief) compares the chief to a tree as he is the protector of his nation through his non-discriminatory nature. He cares for all his people. The Batswana express this riddle in a proverb and say *kgosi, thothobolo o olelamatlakala* meaning the chief is for all the good and the bad.

A tree by its nature is where the birds build their nests. The purpose the birds living on trees is that their enemies should find it difficult to attack them. When the boys throw stones at the birds they hide on the trees.

The authority of the chief and his elevation in making decisions is even portrayed by the proverbs, *morena ha a tentshwe moduopo* (the chief does not wear a tripe loin). There is a narrative that in the past when a man had erred there was a practice that he would be given a loin garment – *tsheya* made of the tripe of an ox to wear. He would walk around with this kind of a *tsheya* and not change to other types. This act is one of the rulings of a chief. Due to the chief's authority, the council and the people would not do the same to him when he is at fault. This particularly happened when a man had committed adultery.

Sekese (2011:156) says this type of a loin cloth- *moduopo* was a smart casual design. Basotho (Southern Sotho) would spectacularly soften a cow's tripe to make this type of a garment. This kind of a loin design was called *moduopo*.

The explanation is that the chief is always right, practically because all the decisions he takes emanate from the members of the community deliberations. Sekese (2011:156) adds that the chief has to be given due respect due to his status in the society. People cannot snub at him, for example say that he is not well dressed. Even practically he would not wear *moduopo* as it also symbolises wrong doing.

If the chief does not do his duty, the people leave with one of the princes to form a new community. Dr Molema (pers com 2012) makes the following observation about the movement from one chief to another to form further communities when the people are dissatisfied:

Usually fighting for the chieftainship and the one who loses runs  
into the sunset... Usually princesses fighting ... What I want to  
say, they are one.

The brother of a chief takes some of the members of his lineage to look for land and forms another *kgoro* (local Sotho community). The Sotho groups observe this experience of theirs with the following proverb, *habo kang ha ho jeoe* (where people are fighting, there is nothing to eat). The explanation is that stubbornness to live together even where there is a quarrel leads to war

and destruction of the community. Mokitimi (1997:26) says people have to be flexible so that life may continue for the good of all.

When some members of the Sotho community walk away from their previous community to form a new one, they implement the following Sotho proverb, *ho ya ka makgoro ha se ho lahlana* (to go away with some *kgoro* members is not to become mutually alienated from one's people). In this regard, another leadership structure is formed that is similar to the previous one and other Sotho local communities. The Sotho now implement a proverb that says *ntwa ke ya madula mmoho* with a literal translation 'people that stay together quarrel often'. Although the disagreements with the original *kgoro* have caused similar people to have more than one community they still have consciousness of being akin to each other by promoting Sotho governance.

The new community implements the following proverb, *mphe mphe e ya lapisa molekane, motho o kgonwa ke sa ntlo ya hae* (give me, give me, is tiring my brother with the same calibre, a person has to fend for himself), i.e. one needs to have resources of one's own and not be a beggar. The new, younger chief means that he does not want to ask his brother for resources anymore, he will fend for himself together with his people. He finds a land where he will allocate ploughing fields for food and grazing land for everyone under his jurisdiction.

Sothos who followed the chief's brother and who have similar leadership skills or a similar legacy as the chief's brother, form a local *kgotla* (council kraal) to see that the community observes the law and other social practices of the Sotho. The individuals of the entire community are encouraged to cooperate with each other under the chief's guidance by the proverbs such as *bana ba monna ba ntsha sebata lefikeng* (children of a man succeed to bring out a wild animal from the rock). The proverb encourages people to cooperate with each other in the village for their daily activities so that their community can grow from strength to strength under the leadership of their new chief.

\*Molato Tshepiso (17/1/2016) who is part of the Bopedi chieftaincy although not a chief himself, says the following:

We do accept the Basotho (Southern Sotho) into our communities when they have problems. We are made happy by their tenacity. They handle life well. We treat them well more than the word. They do what we do. When we go to the fields, they also do so. They help us; they eat what we eat. Everything that we eat, they eat... *dinawa* (beans), we eat *moroho* (green vegetables) of Sepedi, they eat with us... what we do they should agree with it and practice accordingly.

When the Basotho (Southern Sotho) have problems with their previous community, the Bapedi are happy to assist them to assimilate into the Bapedi local communities.

The Bapedi find that the Basotho (Southern Sotho) understand the Sotho way of life in the village as practiced by the Bapedi, e.g. the preparation of similar foods between the Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) such as *moroho* and *dinawa*. They also understand Sotho community work such as *ho hlaola* (hoeing) in the fields. In return, the community leaders expect loyalty from the newly acquired community members and adherence to the norm. The Sotho created the proverb *Nketjwane o etsisa Nkolane* (Nketjoane imitates Nkolane). This proverb has an English equivalent, "when in Rome, do as the Romans". If a person as a member of the community does not do what others do, s/he is described in an idiom *ho ba lejela thoko* Mokitimi (1997:24) gives the following explanation,

Ho jela thoko

(To stand far away when one eats)

Expl: To be on the opposite site. A person who does not cooperate or support the initiatives of others – distancing oneself from the community's activities.

*Ho ba lejela thoko* literally means 'to eat separately from others' i.e. to distance oneself from others. The Sotho do not like this kind of attitude in their governance.

The above Sotho governance has reinvented itself into a new space and improved structure in contemporary times. While the local *kgotla* still exists at the village level, it is extended in the form of the Senate of Chiefs. The chiefs of the Batlokoa, Bakuena and Bataung in Lesotho met as the Senate in Maseru gathered on 24-28 October 2013 to deliberate on issues that affect their respective communities and to decide how to resolve them together.

During an interview, Chief Joel Motšoenene (pers com 2013) observed a similar structure amongst the Batswana:

I remember one time [as Basotho (Southern Sotho) chieftaincy] we visited Botswana governance institutions, although they are more modern they are still similar to ours. What happens at their governance institutions are still similar to the Basotho (Southern Sotho) ... The councillors somehow are mixed with the chieftaincy; they also do not do anything without consultation with the chief.

Chief Motšoenene observes that the Batswana governance institution is similar to that of the Basotho (Southern Sotho), although they have a variation in that they are modernised. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) chiefs wanted to see how the Batswana make the councillors work hand in hand with the chieftaincy system so that the same procedure could be implemented in Lesotho to harmonise new political councillors with the chieftaincy.

The same Sotho proverbs across the three groups show that gains at national level benefit the wider group or nation. Members of the society under the leadership of their chief, work together to avail resources. Examples are food as in *letsholo* (hunting expedition), water conservation and land protection. Such people working towards gains for the nation are referred to as *mohlanka wa moreneng morena* (the chief's servants, a chief). Other proverbs indicating participation in the deliberations of a Sotho court council that punctuate the speeches or introduce them at the *kgotla* further indicate similarity in the structure of Sotho governance.

Among other proverbs, *lentswe la setjhaba ke poho* (a voice of a people is a bull) can be interpreted as, "a voice of the people is a resolution that needs to be implemented by the chief". This means that the chieftaincy is conscious that deliberations cannot just be made when the people are together with a leadership; they have to be implemented at a local level after the discussions.

Mokitimi (1997:30) shows other proverbs that reflect the Sotho governance while the deliberations of authority and arbitration of law are done.

Matsoho a morena a malelele

A chief's hands are long.

(A chief is a generous person)

'Muso ha o tate

The government does not hurry

In government things are always done in a beareucratic way

Lekhetho ke boroko le khotso

Tax is sleep and peace

One cannot rest at peace until s/he has done her duty in the community

The chieftaincy and representatives of the nation at *kgotla* across the three groups take on the above issues of the society and look for methods to resolve the ills of individuals in order to promote a healthy nation and the status quo. Professor Moleleki (9/10/2015) presented the keynote address entitled *Others and Togetherness in African Folklore* at the Southern African Folklore Society (SAFOS) at the University of the Free State. He said the decisions are made by the collective work for every individual in the society, as in the above case of the chieftaincy and its people.

A proverb that illustrates this collective to the individual relationship is *motho ke motho ka batho* (a person is a person by other people). By this proverb, the Sotho community regards a *motho* (a

person) as the first point of focus in the allocation of resources, i.e. food and services such as arbitration of law and allocation of land. Regard for the individual as the first point of focus by the community and its chieftaincy among the Sotho is the self-perception of an African. It is both as an integrated member of his/her society as well as an independent individual. The Sotho also use the proverb *hlaahlela le lla ka le leng* (when I stand tall, it is because I am standing on the shoulders of others), i.e. individuals are empowered because of the actions of the people in their community.

The Lesotho Prime Minister or the presidents of Botswana and South Africa and their ministers deliberate in parliament on national issues, plans and projects in harmony with the chieftaincy function above. Here, the local communities still have to be protected as *dikgoro*, i.e. their protection should be guarded from the village to national level to ensure the safety of the entire group. Professor Antoinette Tidjane-Alou (7/10/2015) gave the keynote presentation at a SAFOS conference entitled "From I and I. This is our Culture: Interplays of Many and the One in Africa and the African Diaspora".

Professor Antoinette Tidjane-Alou (7/10/2015) said the individual at the local level relationship with the national collective, as in the Sotho groups above, is the matter of the "I" as the consequence of the "we". The "I" fits together in the arch, as a segment and these segments live together in harmony, e.g. the collection of praise poems in Mangoaela (2013) is a magnum opus of the narratives of the wars that the Sotho warriors and chiefs fought to protect the Sotho people.

As a Sotho group dislikes invasion, especially the invasion of other communities, and believes that a chieftaincy and its council must be shrewd, they formed the historical proverb, *o se ke wa nwa ba Khaeeane* (do not drink like Khaeeane/do not dream while awake). According to chief Moletsane's praise poems, Khaeeane was an excellent Batlokwa warrior. However, upon the arrival of the Bakuenana of Moshoeshe 1 and chief Moletsane 1 of the Bataung, they found him drunk while guarding a pass – *kgoro* named after the local community attached to the chiefdom. He told them secrets about his Batlokoa community, 'Manthatisi and Chief Sekonyela.

Khaeeane's story has been embodied in the praise poems of chief Moletsane that have since been published in the collection of Mangoela (1997). It reappears again in the form of an idiomatic expression, *ho noa joala ba Khaeeane* (to drink heavily). The author presented a paper, "Sesotho Lexical Items as Depositories of a story Genre" at Southern African Folklore Society (SAFOS) at the University of Capetown on 5 September 2013. She provides a full narrative that was presented and ensued out of a tour by Mosebi Damane (1991) at Khoro e betloa (Marabeng) while analysing the events narrated in Moletsane's praise poem and Mokhatlo oa Litichere tsa Sesotho (2007), where they were also discussing chief Moletsane's praise poems.

The Batlokoa lineage was a well off people. They had a great chieftaincy. When their chief died, his wife 'Manthatsi took over. She was a very powerful queen. He had a son by the name of Sekonyela. At that time Moshoeshe had just established his fortress at Thaba-bosiu. Chief Sekonyela of the Batlokoa, an agemate of Moshoeshe would leave his homestead and set forth in the direction of Thaba-bosiu with his friends bo-Khaeeane to the new fortress of Moshoeshe. While in the earshot of Moshoeshe he would tell him, "hey you look here, you are not a chief..." and continue to lower down Moshoeshe. It was true, Moshoeshe was not from the chieftancy family. But his mother was from the great chieftancy family of the Bafokeng and he was determined to establish himself as one. Moshoeshe although pissed off by Sekonyela's taunting always responded to him humbly, "look, I understand you are a chief, please stop to come to my place in order to nag me". But Sekonyela wouldn't hear of it. This particular past time of his went on and on, he could not help but laugh at Moshoeshe and her endeavours in establishing a kingdom.

One day Moshoeshe went to Thepung (Eastern Cape) to buy some cattle but changed his mind and thought of raiding the cattle as he was a warrior. The abaTembu had really big and fat type of cattle with long horns. The purpose was to celebrate the passing of initiation rites with regard to his first son Mohato (Letsie). Mohato was about to come out of the initiation school. So Moshoeshe and his men set forth to Thepung. He was happy and it was a great pleasure for him to do this



exercise for his first born. While he was away with the men of the village, Sekonyela heard about it. He went straight to Thaba-bosiu and contemptuously sat on Moshoeshoe's chieftancy throne. Sekonyela and his men eloped with 'Mamohato, his wife. Her original name was Mabela, also a daughter of the Bafokeng chieftancy, decided upon by Kholu, Moshoeshoe's mother.

While Letsie heard about this episode, they had to abandon the initiation school since there were no men as they had gone to Thepung. They ran after Sekonyela and his men and found them around Thupa-kubu. Sekonyela and his men had cut the pumpkin they found in 'Mamohato's field around this area. They scooped it out and used it as an ablution facility. They had also burnt the corn in the fields. Letsie and his age mates never asked any questions when they arrived. They fought to their last bit. The Sekonyela regiment retreated and ran back home. Letsie took away his mother and went back to Thaba-bosiu with her.

Moshoeshoe was very hurt that he could not celebrate the coming of age of Mohato whose initiation name was Letsie. Once Letsie and his age mates have gone out of the initiation hut and surroundings they could not go back. They had to burn the initiation hut in haste before they went for the Batlokoa. Moshoeshoe planned to retaliate. He called his friend chief Moletsane. When they arrived at the most difficult pass of the Batlokoa, *Khoros e Betloa*, they found Khaeeane. They were a bit afraid. Khaeeane was the knight of the Batlokoa. He was the most feared soldier amongst the Sotho. But later Khaeeane came to them, he could hardly walk because of drunkenness. He told Moshoeshoe and Moletsane how they are celebrating because there was an initiation ceremony yesterday. The two chiefs and their men went down to 'Manthatisi's place and killed the Batlokoa mercilessly as they were angry. They later regretted these as the intention was to fight and not kill women and children. So Basotho normally say, '*U se ke oa noa ba Khaeeane*' literally meaning (don't drink Khaeeane's [beer]) which means 'don't drink heavily'. Monyakane (5/9/2013).

Sekese (2011:143) has a different version of the story, however still based on Khaeeane and the fight between Moshoeshoe and Batlokoa.

Khaeeane was Sekonyela's knight. When Moshoeshoe defeated Sekonyela on the mountain called Khoro-e-betloa, he was not there. It is like he went to Mautse the previous day at Kalanke where there was feast and alcoholic drink was in abundance. After Moshoeshoe had defeated Sekonyela, he took over the plateau of Khoro-e-betloa and confiscated the Batlokoa herds of cattle and their villages or *digoro* and even the villages of 'Mota, the younger brother of Sekonyela.

Khaeeane arrived at night and stopped by the Crikwars' cars near Molapo at the feet of the plateau. He then spoke, "men of Motonosi!" The answer was, "ooe?" "Have the Bakhalahali gone (derogatory name for Basotho)?" The answer: "They have gone." – "Are you all here?" Answer: "We are all here."- "where is my black and white one?"- "It is still there." He had a bull in the black and white colour. Answer: "I said so, what could Bakhalahali do to us." They listened to him for a long time as he praised his people of the Batlokoa and scorned them and praising his cow. When Molapo commanded them to accompany him, he now became afraid and woke up from his drunkenness; he asked them where they are taking him.

He asked those who held him, "what is this boy doing to me?....Motete of Makhobalo held captive Hlahatsi, the younger brother of Mokotjo – the uncle of Sekonyela. His village was Fobane. They were afraid to kill him as he was a chief, they took him to chief Moshoeshoe. The chief then said: Today there is no sparing of any one (*ha ho na ngwan'e motle*).It is a long time since I have been praying Sekonyela to keep peace with me, so that other nations cannot overcome us, but Sekonyela refused and continued to fight me. I have been avoiding to fight with him, but he has not heeded me, and he said to me, my cows have hoes on their tails! Today there is no mercy. Kill him! They killed him and he died. (Sekese 2011: 143).

The above two versions of the stories through their different contexts and intersection between those contexts give the picture of the entire story behind the proverb *o se ke wa nwa ba Khaeeane*. They indicate the tradition of making a chiefdom, by presenting the two chiefdoms of the Sotho, one of the Bakuena and one of the Batlokoa with their other member communities as *dikgoro* that rally behind them in the formation of chieftaincy. Moletsane of the Bataung as a great chief also represent a *kgoro*. The politics of empowering one as a chief through marriage are also playing themselves between Moletsane of the Bataung and Moshoeshoe of the Bakuena.

The proverb narrative further shows the diplomatic dynamics by portraying the powerful knight Khaeeane as the main character, that if Khaeeane had been alert on duty as the powerful person among the Batlokoa, his community could not have been defeated. Characters are mainly a chiefdom management, for example Mabela the princess who is from the Bafokeng lineage is the mother of Letsie or Mohato. 'Manthatisi, the chiefteness of the Batlokwa, mother of prince Sekonyela, an agemate of Moshoeshoe is also portrayed as a powerful queen in the story. The story portrays Moshoeshoe and Sekonyela's relatives such as 'Mota, Mokotjo, Molapo, Motete, Makhobalo and Hlahatsi that supported Moshoeshoe and Sekonyela chiefdoms respectively. For example Hlahatsi and Mokotjo were the uncles of Sekonyela. Molapo and Letsie were the sons of Moshoeshoe. The villages of these men supported Sekonyela and Moshoeshoe's chiefdom respectively. The proverb is now a legend portraying the structure of Sotho chiefdom.

The initiation as an institution that promotes chieftaincy and livelihood is portrayed in the proverb. Mohato now has his own regiment from the initiation school and he can fight and win war with them. Letsie was to have his village as Matsieng, named after this regiment that attacked the Batlokwa in the absence of his father. There is also the raiding of the cattle from the neighbouring communities to come and feed the community members, for example Sekonyela raiding Moshoeshoe village and attacking Letsie. Moshoeshoe also went out to raid the Abathembu so that he can perform initiation rites for his son and have a big party.

Although the blame is put on Khaeeane as a knight, a man of expertise, one cannot help but see three great Sotho chieftaincies who are contesting power and people. These chieftaincies are even afraid of each other. Moletsane's chiefdom is neighbouring 'Manthatisi's *khoro e betloa* or

Marabeng in the south. Moshoeshoe's Thababosiu is in the north of Marabeng. Moletsane and Moshoeshoe decide to raid 'Manthatisi's village.

Consequently, the Batlokoa were badly defeated by Moletsane and Moshoeshoe. Hence, when Moletsane praises himself in Mangoela (2013) he says;

*Seoa kgorong ha 'Manthatisi se apere masela*

The one who falls at 'Manthatisi's fort wearing modern design clothes/suits  
(a modern chief who did not have a challenge in defeating 'Manthatisi).

Moletsane was a chief who liked fine things in life. He wore the best modern clothes including suits. Monyakane (2014:178) explains that Moletsane accepted the Anglican missionaries at his village in Mekoatleng, now part of the Free State. Chief Moletsane was the first chief to accept the Anglican missionaries amongst the Sotho. They promoted literacy and their modern life style rubbed on him as he, Moletsane explains above. The Sotho nowadays have the idiomatic expression *ho apara lesela* literally meaning 'to wear a cloth' meaning to dress smartly. This idiomatic phrase is equivalent to Moletsane's praise line above.

Moletsane et al (2000) – chief and a professor Maboe Ramoshebi Moletsane and his brothers explain the narrative of a neat, tidy and smart chief Moletsane who is his ancestor further by mentioning that when he was wearing a suit, he would carry his smart cudgel. The Sotho have another idiomatic expression *ho ja koto* or *ho itja* (to eat a cudgel or to eat oneself) meaning to dress smartly. The Sotho might have admired their chief and leader as a model and formed the idioms and proverbs by the way he carried himself.

But being a christian and a modern man does not deter Moletsane to traditionally fight 'Manthatisi when she is wrong. In other words Moletsane's lines above quote him as saying that he is not a soft one because of modernisation and literacy. He can still fight 'Manthatisi and his son Sekonyela with a spear and matchet when it is necessary – hence he calls himself *sewa kgorong ha 'Manthatisi* (the one who pounces on 'Manthatisi's fort). 'Manthatisi was a woman

warrior and a chieftainess. Her husband Sekonyela died at war while still young. When Moletsane fought the Batlokoa, they were under the rule of their queen, 'Manthatisi.

Moletsane's praise poems further show that he fights alongside Moshoeshoe against the Batlokoa because Moshoeshoe married five daughters of the Hlalele, an elderly Bataung chief. Hlalele is an elder of chief Moletsane. Mohlomi, one of Moshoeshoe's grandfathers, told him to marry more wives in order to become a great king (Ellenberger, 1988:109). In Moletsane's praise poem, there is a narrative that the prince of the Batlokoa, chief Sekonyela, whose fortress is at Marabeng opposite to the Berea plateau (between Ficksburg and Ladybrand in the modern Freestate), often told Moshoeshoe that he is not a chief because he is not the chief's son (Mangoaela, 1997). Nevertheless, Moletsane fights the Batlokoa because he has a fatherly responsibility over the daughters of Hlalele. Moshoeshoe had married five daughters of Hlalele the elder chief of the Bataung and the grand father of Moletsane. Moshoeshoe had brought closer the Bataung communities in order to help fight wars through marriage.

Moletsane polity is no longer in the form that it used to be due to modern boundaries between Lesotho and the Free State. The Bafokeng *ba ha Sebolela kuena* in Rustenburg, who are said to be the youngest family amongst the Bafokeng lineage, still conspicuously show the qualities of what lineages are like as smaller Sotho communities. The Bafokeng, as a polity, are still seen even today (Kriel, 2010:48). In the Rustenburg area, around the Magaliesburg where they were able to regain land after 1994, their preserved traditional governance works well after it was merged with the contemporary system of democracy. They still call *pitso* (assembly of the nation) in the form of *Khothakhothe*, another traditional way of a Sotho assembly of the people.

The importance of political structures through chieftainship such as the above amongst the Sotho has a long history that began with a small collective, i.e. a village or clan (Boloetse, 2015b:20). Boloetse adds that this particular structure amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) started with a movement of Sotho people from one place to another. Boloetse (2015b:20) calls it a "small chiefdom", but for the sake of uniformity, the study refers to the small chiefdoms as "clan communities". The same people, who are closely related by blood across the three groups, come

from small communities in the form of clans and are collectively a lineage, i.e. a community where a line of related communities ensued.

The Bahurutse and Bafokeng were once together in Botswana, where they intermarried to form one community, however the majority of the Bafokeng and their leadership moved away and spread further south to the Transvaal (now Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Gauteng) where they formed a Basotho group with a separate leadership from the Batswana (Ellenberger, 1997:15-16). In this case, the allocation of land and animals was an issue. The Bafokeng were tired of the Bahurutse's manner of treating animals, especially the castration of calves. The Bafokeng decided to move to where they would grow their plants and look after their animals separately (Ellenberger, 1997:15-16). It was the beginning of the Sotho self-determination for enough allocation of resources and decentralisation of governance.

The following interview with Mr Thulo (pers com 2012) gives an example of the structure of different clans that ensued from the former Sotho lineages of the Bahurutse and Bafokeng:

Bataung are related to Batswana, because Bataung are from the Bahurutse, they belong to the Bahurutse group. That is why you find Pedis are also not far from that. The Bapedi are the Basotho also, that is where you get all these groups like the Bakgatla. We do have Bakgatla in [Ba]Tswana, we have Bafokeng, we have Batshweneng, we have Bakuena, all those groups are also found in [Southern] Sotho, in the Southern Sotho group, in the [Ba]Tswana too.

In other words, the Bataung clan amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) group emanated from the Bahurutse line. The Bahurutse and their clans form the bulk of the Batswana group as shown above. The Bapedi are a clan and a Sotho group that resulted from the marriage between the Bahurutse and the Bafokeng lineages.

Although the Bahurutse and Bafokeng separated into the Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho), their offshoots seem to have been at liberty to join any Sotho group showing that they are independent from their mother communities who intermarried and who are related. Politically, the same people form boundaries by beginning various new communities. However, the boundaries became weak in calibre as several generations formed an extended family within a much larger group of people related to one another. As a result, the Sotho clans are similar in that the boundaries of their different communities have become imaginary in the three groups.

As there are now additional boundaries in the form of international physical boundaries between the three groups, the historical narrative of the relationship between the Bapedi clan, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana is obscured. However, the above story of the Bapedi because of intermarriage between the Bahurutse and Bafokeng (who formed the Batswana, Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) groups respectively), shows that the Sotho appropriated the boundaries between themselves as a similar people to co-own their shared history. The Bapedi clan has now grown into a Sotho group similar in structure and tradition to that of the Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho).

Ratokelo Nkoka's village which is the strong hold of the Bafokeng lineage is near the Bapedi village in Lesotho. Ratokelo Nkoka (pers com 2013) related the presence of the Bapedi clan among the Basotho (Southern Sotho) group in an interview:

At my place in Mathebe, there is a place called Peding. There lives typical Bapedi. They are not many, but the village is called Peding, where the Bapedi live. I don't know where the Bapedi now live as a larger group and if there is a difference between themselves and the ones here. Because what I see is that the only difference is that those in the group speak Northern Sotho. They are the same with eh the Basotho in Zambia, they still talk Sesotho but with an influence of Lozi.

Ratokelo Nkoka indicates that part of the Bapedi clan moved to what is now known as the Limpopo Province and Tshwane (Pretoria) where they have formed a powerful group that officially uses their dialect Sepedi for writing and speaking. The rest of the Bapedi clan remained amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and continued to speak the Sotho dialect, Sesotho that is prevalent amongst Basotho (Southern Sotho). He says this is a similar situation to the Lozi chiefdom of Sebetwane and the Basotho group in Lesotho and the Free State.

The Bapedi were originally part of the Bafokeng senior group amongst the Basotho, but as their chiefdom grew, they established a Sotho group in their present destination (Mokoana, 2009). The above interview shows that similar Sotho clans with the same origin move to their preferred places and form communities, leaving part of their communities at their original places of formation. Consequently, the Sotho ended up having various communities of similar people.

The Sotho clans developed into related generations of uncles, grandchildren and great grandchildren through procreation, like in the case of the 'Mathulare and Mokhatla where the Bapedi ensued. These collectives of people created a network as close relatives and to survive as a community, they form a village. The clan members identify with a particular Sotho totem and cooperate with each other to fulfil the social needs and goals of the Sotho society.

Social interdependence is promoted amongst every individual in the community and they are governed by a chief who manages their affairs. The study shall henceforth describe the leaders of the clans as local chiefs. The chief traditionally comes from a senior family in the collective of these relatives. The male siblings who do not wish to be led by their elder brother have a choice to take some of the community members from the lineage and form further small communities or clans, e.g. the Bakgatla lineage that emanates from the Bahurutse. A similar situation is witnessed in other lineages of the Bataung, Bafokeng and Bakuena. There seems to be co ownership of the Sotho clans amongst the three groups that shows that they are similar.



### 6.2.2 Similarity of clans political relations amongst the Sotho groups

Historical contexts contribute to forming further Sotho clans, e.g. Sebetwane of the Bafokeng lineage took some Bafokeng members to form the Makololo (Lozis/ *Barotse*) clan to fight in the *Difaqane* or *Mfecane* wars. He later established chiefdom among the Lozis (c.f. Smith, 1956:49).

Pitje (1950) further discusses that cattle raiding also contributed to the formation of small clans in the strife to sustain themselves as emerging leaders took some of the members to form further clans. Mokitimi (1991:64-65) says this activity of cattle raiding led to tribal wars. The Sotho groups' communities used spies and explained their experiences through proverbs. (Jankie: 264) provides the following proverbs.

*Kgomo di hapua ka dihlwela*

Cattle are captured through the spies' help

(investigation brings victory)

According to Mokitimi (1991: 65), the activity of hunting helped the men improve their skill of fighting. The cattle's raiding was common, particularly in the nineteenth century. There were many tribal wars during this period. If a spy does a good job, his community is able to capture cattle. A spy acts as an under cover agent who gathers information about the where the enemy is situated, the size of their army and other useful information for his regiment. The proverb *kgomo di hapua ka dihlwela* goes together with *Mara ha a se na dihlwela a ya wela* literally translated 'an army without the spies fall' meaning a victory of an army depends on its spies.

Sekese (2011:168) provides the following explanation of the above proverb.

Lihloela ke batho bao morena, ha a rera ho ea loantša morena  
e mong, e ka khonang pele ho tsohle a ka rome banna ba  
babeli, kapa ba bararo; 'me banna bao, ha ba ea joalo taba ea  
pele eo ba e hlokometseng, le eo ba e laeloang ha ba e-ea, le  
ha ba khutla, ke tsela eo mara a habo a tla tsamaeang ka eona,

hore ba se ke ba lemuhua, kapa ba bonoa ba sa le hojana.  
Hape, lihloela li lemohe, ha e ba ba futuheloang ba lutse ka  
hlokomelo, kapa booatla, hore mara a habo a tle a se ke a  
tšosoa ke mara a morena ea futuheloang, e tl'e mpe be ona a  
tla tšosa morena ea futuheloang.

[Spies are people that the chief decides to send to survey the  
enemy scenario when he intends to fight another chief. He  
sends two or three men. When these men go to survey the  
enemy the first thing they observe is the route they are going  
to use when they go to the enemy and when they return to  
their village. It is a route they are going to use so that they  
cannot be noticed when they venture for war and when they  
come back. They also look for possible attack on their part  
when they are resting, they are also careful not to be attacked  
as an army, it should be their fellow soldiers and themselves  
who will surprise the chief who their intention is to attack.]

The spy has to be an excellent warrior who is able to make a detailed survey, whether it is  
feasible for his fellow army members to win the war against the enemy as war is a risky affair.  
As a result Sotho has a saying that *ntwa ke mosebetsi* (war is work).

The narrative of a warrior in the boy child as a future warrior amongst their communities is  
reflected in the following Sotho proverb that is a short praise poem in nature.

*Ngwana moshemane ke kabelwa manong*

*Kabelwa bo mohakajane le tlake*

[A boy child is a sacrifice to bearded Vultures

A sacrifice to crows and vultures]

The meaning is that the boy child will grow to become a man that fights for his nation. Mokitimi (1991:66) explains that males that are able bodied are expected to go to war to protect their community. Men who die at war are sometimes not buried. Birds such as vultures and crows eat their bodies. Warriors that are victorious at war create their praise poems to commemorate their victory of the war that took place and they won or survived.

The parallelism with regard to the action *kabelwa* in the above lines is an example of a praise form. It also highlights euphemism e.g. (rationing [to the vultures]) where the line was supposed to use killing or eaten by the vultures where someone does not win the war but has to repeat the events of the day as he witnessed the history of the nation in making in his quest to survive. For example chief Masopha's lines in Mangoaela (1997), in the war at Senekal in the Free State (*Ntwa ya Senekane*) where the Basotho (Southern Sotho) were fighting for land with the Afrikaanders, say *Malefetsane ...o hula ntwa ka tlhako tsa morao*. Literally, 'Malefetsane pushes the war with the rear hoofs' in order to say I honourably fought the war although I was defeated. He uses a euphemism, because it is not admirable thing to get defeated. Most Sotho praise poems employ the technique of euphemism when they narrate terrible experience at war.

Chief Maama's praise poems relate the following lines in Mangoaela (1997:96).

Mong'a pere e putsoa a robala  
 [The owner of the blue horse is sleeping]  
 O robaletseng, ngoan'a lekhoa,  
 [Why are you asleep a white man's child]  
 Har'a medupe ea lipula e na?  
 [When the rain is drizzling]

The Basotho (Southern Sotho) had been fighting with the British in the gun war that took place at Mafeteng around Boleka and Mathebe. When Sir Battle Frere dies in this war as an honourable man, chief Maama does not say he died – *o shwele*. He chooses to say 'he slept', euphemising the hard word to say about such a great leader – *o shwele*. He is of the high status as a result his 'horse is blue' ~ *pere e putswa*. Maama does not call bullets directly, to show that both armies

were using guns and the bullets short from both sides hovering over the space as people got shot and died. He says there was a drizzle of rain, and this metaphor with regard to the bullets is euphemistical.

The above small communities amongst the Sotho people do not entirely cut ties with their original lineage after a clan has been formed and they traditionally show that they belong together. Sotho small communities form narratives by means of totems to reveal from where they originate, their relationship with their former Sotho lineages, and why they became independent communities (Damane, 2006:ii; Matšela & Moletsane, 2006:6; Phafoli, 2009:166-167 & 2014:183). Hence, they appreciate working together and co-owning their gains as a people, as shown in the above examples.

The Bataung ba ha Moletsane developed as an independent clan from the rest of the Bataung, e.g. the Batau amongst the Bapedi group and Bataung amongst the Batswana. Moletsane, although one of the younger siblings, broke away from the main clan of Bataung of Hlalele because he was a proved leader. He fought alongside Prince Sebetwane of the Bafokeng as one of his most formidable warriors, against Basotho chiefs across the then Western Transvaal. Sebetwane later formed the Makololo clan, defeated other Bahurutse tribes, gained popularity, and created a name for himself that qualified him to be a great chief of the Lozi. Moletsane later moved to Mekwatleng in the then southern Transvaal with some of the Bataung members where he formed his chiefdom and became part of the governance of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) (c.f. Smith 1956; Moletsane et al. 2000). Moletsane et al. (2000:7) presents the totem of these Bataung family members that formed the clan of Moletsane. The two last lines of the new Bataung ba ha Moletsane community totem is found in Moletsane's praise poem collected by Mangoaela (2013).

The entire totem shows how Moletsane took some members of the Bataung lineage under his wing and formed a community with them because of his fighting skills that protected them:

Tshehla bo-mmamothebele kokomoha,  
[The yellow one of the *Mmamothebele* be proud]

Tshehla thupa lekakuba,  
 [The yellow thick *lekakuba* stick]  
 Motjhana ekare a se na ba habo moholo  
 [The nephew does not have the maternal side relatives]  
 Wa nna pukutla leleo a ikela;  
 [He would then slice a piece of meat and go]  
 Ke namane ya digwa  
 [He is the yellow calf of the woods]  
 Ha e je tsa batho,  
 [It is not eating other people's head of cattle]  
 Empa e itjella dirobala-naheng.  
 [It eats game]  
 Mora Mmaphunye sebesetswa nama  
 [The son of Mmaphunye, the one whom meat is roasted]  
 Marumo ona wa ipesetsa  
 [No body melts his spears, he does it himself]  
 (Moletsane et al., 2000:7)

The above last two lines are similar to Moletsane's praise poem in *Lithoko tsa Marena a Basotho*, i.e. the community who owns the totem and their relative, chief and leader founded a clan because he was a warrior. However, the rest of the lines show that both he and his people originate from the Bataung lineage (yellow calf/ lion). He is the son of 'Maphunye who was married to a Motaung chief. In other words, he mentions that the clan he has formed is similar to other Bataung clans, as he is also a Motaung.

With the aid of its totem, the new community is able to maintain the history of the clan's origin and its relatedness to other Sotho clans or communities of the same lineage in order to know where it fits in hierarchically with regard to the entire Sotho people (Matšela & Moletsane, 2006:6). This knowledge is passed down from generation to generation through children's games, praise poems and communicating with one another, e.g. in greetings.

On SABC 2's programme *House Call* every Saturday about health matters, the presenter, Dr Ramoroesi Ramathesele, introduces and closes the programme with the following clan praise lines;

*ke Motaung wa ha Moletsane,*

*ke namane e tshehla*

(This is the one who belongs to the lineage of a lion,  
the descendent of Moletsane, the yellow calf).

He informs the viewers that he is to be counted among the Bataung, reminds them of their heritage, and that they have a stake in his achievement as a medical doctor wherever they are. Dr Ramathesele quotes his ancestor, chief Moletsane's praise poem lines reflected in his totem praise poems to make the Bataung and other communities that he is supposed to achieve as he is a descendent of the great warrior and the chief.

Dr Ramathesele above says 'because I am, therefore we are'. This is a concept of narrative identity. Phafoli and Zulu (2014:181) in agreement with Georgakopoulou (2007:16) and Yuval-Davis (2010:266) regard the notion of narrative identity in the following manner.

Narrative identity...can be conceived as narratives that people tell about themselves and others about who they are, and who they are not, as well as who and how they would like to be, or should be. In narrative identity ... narrators can present themselves in the capacity of : animator – the aspect of self that actually produces talk; author- the aspect of self that is responsible for the content of talk; figure, the main character in the story, that is someone who belongs to the world that is spoken about and not the world in which the speaking occurs; and principal – the self established by what is said and committed to what is said.

Dr Ramathesele calls himself with his totem name in order to co own the glory of his success with other Bataung, as he is a member of this lineage. He recites their similar totem praises in order to portray the self as part of the collective identity of ‘because I am therefore we are’ as discussed above. The praise poem allows Dr Ramathesele to portray himself as the main first character in the narrative form as at this moment he is the one bringing success to the entire lineage. He has to perform it for the entire Bataung people.

This thesis adopts the following Hung Ng (2005:19) view as similar to the outlook that ‘because I am, therefore we are’,

Humans exist not only as unique individuals, but also as members of social groups that are formed on the basis of ethnicity .... Reflecting this duality are interpersonal and intergroup modes of behaviour, respectively. Thus, humans can act in terms of their personal self and treat others as individuals (interpersonal behaviour), they can also act in terms of group membership and relate to others as members of this or that group (intergroup behaviour).

When applied to the situation of a person belonging to the collective, individuals can look at themselves and see themselves as part of a community. Hence discuss the individual with an interpersonal behaviour outlook. But looking at Hung Ng (2005:19) outlook above on the definition of a people the thesis finds that discussing the individuals as part of a collective like Dr Ramathesele does is also necessary especially when there is an indication that they share history as the name Bataung indicates.

Dr Ramathesele puts into practice the proverbs that say *metla kgola o e lebisa wa bo* (the one that curves the bone takes it to his family). Sekese (2011:98) provides the following explanation and narrative of the above proverb.

Ke hore, ha u fua lijo, o hopole oeno pele ho bohle. Molemo ofe le ofe oo u o fumanang, o se ke oa lebala oeno. Kapa lijong tsa mofufutso oa hao, joale ka tsa letsema, u 'ne u hopole oeno, ha a sa ka a kena mosebetsing 'me a le teng ha ho jeoa. Etsoe ho na le maele a reng, *ha ho jeoa o ka tla!* Ke maele a qapiloeng ke bafali ba likobo. Khola ke lesapo le thata le koatseng leshetla le bonolo lesapong le bitsoang lesufu. Mehlang ea khale mashetla a masufu a ne a betloa ka phalo; 'me ea betlang joalo e n'e ka khona a se ke a lebala ho fa oabo.

[If you are given food, you should remember your relations (brother) before anyone else. Any privilege that you get, do not forget your brother; or food that you have worked for, such as being given food from the work party (letsema). You should remember your family member who has not been at work and she or he is around when the party members are eating because there are proverbs that say, *ha ho jeoa u ka tla* (when it is time to eat you can come). It is a proverb that animal hide tenders who specialise in making blankets began. *Khola* is a hard bone that covers a soft bone. In the past, parts of the soft bone were removed from the bone with a utensil used to remove some remaining meat from the hide. So a blanket tender of such calibre should not forget his own relations.]

The proverb means that whatever one earns, one has to share it with his or her relations.

Moleleki (1993:100) says that the above outlook of the Sotho is reflected by the proverb *motho ke motho ka batho* (a person is a person because of other people). A person does not live for him or herself. Even in problems, it is not her or his problem alone. As a result when he has done well like Dr Ramathesele, one does it to glorify the entire community. The common proverb of



appreciation of another person when s/he is in trouble is *re lla le wena* literally saying “we cry with you”, while it means ‘we are with you in your problems’.

This particular situation of calling oneself by one’s totem or others by their totems happens daily and reflects in Sotho Radio stations such as Lesedi for the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Thobela for the Bapedi and Motswedeng for the Batswana in South Africa, Radio Lesotho, Moafrica FM in Lesotho and on SABC television channels where Sotho is used as a medium. In the daily Sepedi news bulletin that alternates with Setswana and Sesotho on SABC 2, the usual greeting of the newsreader to the weather broadcaster is *Ngwato!* (One from the Bamangwato clan). A clan with the same name is found among the Batswana. The Bamangwato are also related to the Bahurutse, Bataung and the Bakuena clans across the three Sotho groups (c.f. Moletsane et al., 2000).

### **6.3 Similarity of the chiefdom as a larger political unit amongst the Sotho groups**

In all the Sotho groups, the chiefdom is second in the hierarchical line of leadership. Chiefdoms are formed by a number of Sotho clans living together in one area who form a network under the governance of the senior chief. This section will show that the Sotho chiefdoms are similar and the pivot of their similarity is characteristic of power dynamics for the common good of the Sotho people. The chiefdom became crucial to the survival of the Sotho identity, hence the similarity in its traditional formation and function in the three groups. A Sotho chieftaincy practiced traditional governance or leadership, i.e. their chiefdoms are based on the chieftaincy that is in sympathy with the leadership of the Sotho according to Sotho culture. The following discussion will show the similarity of the Sotho chiefdoms across the Bapedi, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana.

Pitje (1950:53-54) gives an example of Bapedi chiefdoms describing them as a group of people organised under the rule of a linear head whose position is hereditary in the male line, passing from father to son. As a rule, members of a linear group can trace their genealogy, which reveals their relationships between linear heads and the rest of the subjects. The linear chief is invariably called *kgosi* (chief). People who have joined the group by adoption, *mathupya* [in Sepedi] and *bathopua* [in Sesotho] (those conquered during war) or *bafaladi* [in Sepedi] and *bafalli* [in

Sesotho] (migrants who joined voluntarily through formal, verbal negotiation) are also included in the chiefdom. The senior chief has a relationship with other clans who agree to form even bigger governance with him.

The term *kgosi* (chief) is used in all the Sotho groups, although the Basotho (Southern Sotho) like to alternate the noun *kgosi* with *morena*, while the term remains constant for the children of the chief amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho), i.e. *kgosana* (prince) and *kgosatsana* (princess). The shared vocabulary and some incidents indicate the similar formation of the chiefdom amongst the Sotho groups.

A way of forming Sotho chiefdom similar to the one found amongst the Bapedi is found amongst the Southern Sotho. Mahao (2011) and Smith (1956:52-53) give an example of the similarity between the Sebetwane chiefdom among the Basotho. Sebetwane was the son of Mangwane, one of the senior Bafokeng chiefs in the southern Transvaal (now the Freestate and modern Lesotho) from the *Bafokeng ba Patsa* clan. The Sebetwane clan is second in line for the senior Bafokeng chieftaincy. Some notable Bafokeng chiefs, e.g. Lekapetsa and Ramabusetsa, and some deserters from the Batlokwa, joined Sebetwane when he left the southern Transvaal.

Ramabusetsa later disappeared, but was eventually found living with Chief Sebetwane at lake Ngami. Chief Sebetwane also included some of the Maphuthing, who later settled in Pretoria (Tshwane) under Chief Tshwane amongst the Bapedi. Sebetwane went across Botswana and while he relinquished some clans leaving them in Botswana, he acquired other clans from the Batswana group who agreed to fall under his jurisdiction. By the time he established his chiefdom amongst the Lozi of Zambia, he had about 30 000 Sotho people under his rule (c.f. Smith 1956: 52-53).

Smith (1956:53-54) gives another example of a Sotho chiefdom amongst the Bapedi that has the similar structure of leadership to that of the Basotho, i.e. the Maphuthing whose major chiefs were Tshwane and Ratsebe. Their chiefdom was in the area north of the Vaal River. Nkgereanye, the chief of the Bahlakwana clan, which is an off shot of the Bakuena, married Tshwane's

daughter. When the Bahlakwana clan lost many of its members to some of the wars during the *Difaqane*, they acted in close relationship with the Maphuthing. This is how the Tshwane chiefdom grew.

Forming a Sotho chiefdom involves a ritual called *ho fera phatla ya tshwene* (preparing and smearing the monkey's bottom) (Mahao, 2011:45). There is no proper translation of this phrase in English, but this tradition of practicing power dynamics for the common good amongst the Sotho was done to protect, validate and sustain the chieftaincy. The chief's relatives and trusted people live in villages that are nearest to the chief while the conquered and the immigrants live on the periphery of the chiefdom, as they joined the community at a later stage, they might not be trustworthy.

Therefore, Gellner's argument that an ethnic nation or community consists only of blood-related people and that no one may join a different ethnic group does not hold ground in this discussion. However, the dominant group does protect its identity through a self-determined leadership, hence the name of this leadership practice *ho fera phatla ya tshwene*.

In the *History of the Basotho*, Ellenberger (1997) gives an account of how the chiefdom of King Moshoeshoe I's son, Letsie I, was established. Moshoeshoe wanted the missionaries to stay in Lesotho and asked them to choose a place for their ministry. The missionaries told Moshoeshoe that they were impressed by Makhoarane (Moriya/ Moriya). According to Tim Cousins' speech at Morija<sup>27</sup>, the French missionaries were reminded of a place called Moriya back in France. The name was later pronounced in the hardened sounds of Sesotho as Morija. Moshoeshoe and his council at Thaba Bosiu sent Letsie and his fellow initiates from the initiation school to establish a village at Makhoarane to take care of the church. Later prince Molapo, the younger brother of Letsie and other 20-year-olds joined them under the care of Chief Matete of the Bafokeng, the maternal uncle of young Chief Letsie and Prince Molapo.

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<sup>27</sup> Tim Cousins made the speech during the launch of his book *Murder at Morija* as a hosted author at Morija Museum and Archives in 2003.

Mahao (2011:45-46) gives a more detailed and vivid version of *Ho fera phatla ya tshwene* than was discussed by Ellenberger (1997) above amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho). This Sotho tradition narrative is also mentioned by Pitje (1950: 53-54) and Smith (1956:53-54) amongst the Bapedi, and by Breutz (1991: 205-207) amongst the Batswana. Mahao (2011:45-46) shows that when the chiefdom of Letsie I was formed, Letsie and his younger brother Molapo were accompanied by their maternal uncle under *Khororo* accord. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) said they were fortifying the foundation of the chieftaincy and governance with astute men.

The maternal uncle established villages to the east of where the chief's sons were situated. Tšiu, from the Bafokeng lineage and cousin of the sons' father (Moshoeshoe), began a village in the east near the Qhuqhu village. Mahao and Setlokoane of the Bafokeng established their villages at Tlouoe. The sons' maternal uncle from the Bafokeng lineage established villages at Makhoarane, now the present Morija, which is the centre of the area with Letsie, Molapo and Matete. Pitje (1950:53-54) gives a similar formulation of a Sotho chieftaincy amongst the Bapedi and mentions that as a rule, the members in this linear group trace how they are related genealogically with their linear chiefs and the rest of the community. The chief amongst the Sotho is invariably called *kgosi* or *morena*. While the common word used among the Batswana and Bapedi is *kgosi*, Basotho (Southern Sotho) prefer *morena* for this linear head.

Letsie later left in 1858 to establish the present Matsieng village. Near to these villages, Mabea the father of Prince Toloane of the Bafokeng lineage *Lithoko tsa Marena a Basotho* established the Toloane village (Mangoaela, 2013). He was 'Mamohato's cousin, the mother of the young chief Letsie, who was forming the Matsieng chiefdom. Mafa, the son of Mahao established Thaba Tšoeu – Ha Ntlibi, while the son of Matete established Mathebe. This particular set-up remains unchanged today and the names of places are officially recognised to remind the Sotho of the *ho fera phatla ya tshwene* tradition in the formation of a Sotho chiefdom. It seems to be one of the last traditional chiefdoms of the Sotho, as later modern boundaries prevented the practice as they divided the present Lesotho and the Freestate amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho).

Breutz (1991), in mentioning the case of the Bapedi and Batswana, notes that the practice of the Sotho establishing themselves through movement was affected by modern modifications. They could no longer grow their chiefdoms the way they used to due to international boundaries that rendered unshared territories. They became variations of the same people in different modern countries, i.e. the Republic of South Africa, where some places were turned into locations run by municipalities instead of chiefs. However, modern Botswana and Lesotho were left as free territories due to British protection.

The development of urban areas amongst the Sotho where the chieftaincy was less considered, such as in the Free State, caused the Basotho (Southern Sotho) women to create the following song.

Ke tla isa lengolo lena ho mang?  
Ha ho sena morena ka Kgotla.  
[Where would I take this letter to?  
[If there is no chief in the council kraal.]

The Basotho (Southern Sotho) women who are used to chieftaincy governance as their way of life are baffled by lack of it in the location. They complain about lack of order thereof and wonder about where they will find a chieftaincy that will cater their traditional practices needs as in the location, there is no chieftaincy. During the apartheid era, Lesedi FM became a big disseminator of this song during the Sesotho cultural programmes.

The Basotho (Southern Sotho) of this time also composed a saying of indicating the town Bloemfontein as *pereng a tshweu sengangata* (A place of the statue of a white horse). The expression refers to the horse of chief Lerotholi as he fought for the Basotho (Southern Sotho) chieftaincy in Bloemfontein. The Free State women also developed the following song.

*Pere ya morena Lerotholi*  
*E matha ka Bolomo [Bloemfontein] Thabure*

[The horse of chief Lerotholi  
Runs around Bloemfontein]

The above Mokgibo song lines also refer to the incidents of the fight at Mangaung – Bloemfontein, where Lerotholi as modern chief was now fighting on horse back and the Afrikaanders honoured the skill of his fight by engraving his horse as a monument. Basotho (Southern Sotho) women through the Mokgibo song and dance are making a political statement about their political structure of their traditional chieftaincy and its importance. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) women explain that although Mangaung is now a modern city, it is the capital of the chieftaincy of the Basotho (Southern Sotho). The statue of the Lerotholi's horse as part of the chieftaincy can also be seen as monument for the Sotho chieftaincy. As the Sotho they still value their chieftaincy institution, no matter how modern they are.

The traditional role of caring for the welfare of the people has been obscured by the modern municipality system in urban areas and townships (Breutz, 1991). However, on 18 May 2015, SABC 2 presented a parliamentary session where it was declared that traditional chieftaincy in South Africa helps to empower the nation with regard to values and customs that promote moral regeneration and social cohesion.

#### **6.4 Similar traditions of how the Sotho political structures operate**

The leadership practices that go together with how the political structures of a Sotho community operate are discussed by Mahao (2011:06), Pitje (1950:55) and Breutz (1991:205-207). Among the Southern Sotho, it is a tradition for the chief's sons to develop, govern and live in their own villages according to Sesotho governance (Mahao, 2011:06). In the formation of a further community or clan, elders from the former royal kraal, his relatives and fellow initiates from his initiation school support a leader.

These men are divided into *baelets* (advisers), *maqosa* (special diplomats), *merao* (traditional army experts to protect and lead during war), and *diphate/diphatho* (wealthy nobles related to the chief with leadership knowledge), who are entrusted to provide good council to the new leader to

empower him to become a better chief and leader. These foundations of Sotho governance are intended to build a successful nation.

Pitje (1950:55) describes a similar formation in the chieftaincy tradition among the Bapedi:

The chief is a lawmaker, administrator and judge, and is responsible for the welfare of his followers, and for conduct of their affairs. To help him he has two main executives. The first consisting of his near relatives and a few selected and trusted men in the royal kraal.

The Sotho have a two-tier governance or political structure with regard to the institution of chieftaincy. Relatives of integrity and other people of the same calibre accompany the chief in the formation of governance and his fellow initiates form part of his council.

Breutz (1991:205-207) describes this particular cultural practice amongst the Batswana and the rest of the Sotho groups where there are *ntona* (chief messengers) and a noble great messenger, i.e. *monnakgosi* (induna). The *ntona* have two or three assistants. The chief's close relatives and other trustworthy people of the community become part of the chief's governance through the *kgotla* (court council). There is also a *sebaka* (chief mediator). All these people are specialists in guiding the chief.

Mahao (2011:7) discusses that the above team of people in a Sotho governance were divided into different expertise that were intended to help in the upbringing of the prince as a new chief, especially in making him a successful chief with regard to good governance. They were the eyes of his father, their purpose was to see that the calibre of his personality, his behaviour and the way he rules are cultured and with respect. The team was supposed to chide him where he goes wrong. In their leadership, they care about dignity of the chieftaincy or governance. Mahao (2011:7) further discusses that the assembling of different expertise in a chieftaincy institution explains that the Sotho care about straight forward justice and proper culture practice. They did not care about wealth benefit when imparting proper governance. In other words, they hated

corruption in today's terms. They were trusted as they based their arguments on facts and truth for the sake of proper governance and appropriate practice of culture.

## **6.5 Similar role of a chief as a leader across Sotho groups**

This section discusses the similar way a chieftaincy is governed across the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana. Sotho traditional leadership began with the formation and promotion of Sotho clans (Boloetse, 2015b:20). The local chiefs, i.e. the lowest rank of the chieftaincy system, include their subjects in making decisions with regard to their ruling system. If the problems cannot be solved at village level, the chief of a concerned chiefdom will intervene. If solutions can still not be found, the collective leadership of a group will intervene at national level (Boloetse, 2015b:20&2015a).

Kharkhordin (1998) in Braden and Eggen (2002:355) concurs with Boloetse (2015a & b) and mentions that the collective societies do not focus on an isolated individual but on the ethnic collective or group as a national community. Among the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho), every single person in a group belongs to the community that upholds the group's institutions. The *lekgotla* (council or royal kraal) executes the law and preserves the status quo, and/ or the *pitso* (general assemblies) resolve the problems in the society.

The Sotho incorporate an idea of *morena ke morena ka setjhaba* (a chief is a chief by the people/ the chief is a chief because of the people) (Boloetse, 2015:20). This Sesotho proverb is similar to that of the Setswana *kgosi ke kgosi ka setjhaba* (a chief is a chief by the people). 'Kgosi' (chief) is another variation of Sotho equivalent of the word 'morena'. The proverb means that the power of the chief emanates from the people under his leadership. This particular aspect can be regarded as a democratic element in chieftainship. "Democracy" is a Greek term that means a rule by the people. The decisions binding the people are collective, e.g. the community holds assemblies such as *pitso* to voice their suggestions with regard to the legitimate and equal share of resources, e.g. grazing land, water, welfare and services. Every individual is important in contributing suggestions for the betterment of the society. If most people agree with a suggestion, it is adopted as a policy.



Maclean and McMillan (2009:141) term the aforementioned kind of governance by the people "direct democracy". Scott (2014:160) gives an explanation of the concept of direct democracy. He says direct democracy is a practice designed for all citizens to have a say in the choices of suggestions that would affect all. The individuals in a mass meeting have a right to voice their perspectives about a solution to the issue that is discussed for the benefit of the society. It is the rule of citizens where the representatives (demos) of the small communities as segments of a collective carry a mandate of implementing the final suggestions made from the aforementioned discussions in the segments of the collective or smaller communities they have respectively.

The demos acted as a social body, the Sotho call them *banna ba lekgotla* (men of the council). They do not act as isolated heads of communities in arriving at how they are going to disseminate the resolutions of what has to be done. As a result the senior chief has to act on the collective decision making. The heads of the communities in a Sotho chiefdom disseminated a senior chief's decision that they formulated together for the benefit of the entire individuals in the communities that they head. There is a contemporary improvement on this system where Lesotho and Botswana have the council of chiefs in the form of a SENATE. South Africa has a similar body of chiefs in the form of CONTRALESA. Parties that make programmes and general policies through the parliament for the nation work in collaboration with the body of chiefs.

Proverbs that testify to direct democracy, as a system of leadership among the Sotho are, *moro kgotla ha o okolwe mafura* and *Letlaila le tlailela morena* (C.f. Sekese, 2011). Mokitimi (1997:23) explains the above proverb in the following manner.

*Letlaila le tlailela moreneng*

(A bad singer also sings at the chief's place)

Explanation: One should not be afraid to make mistakes,  
it is then that one can be corrected.

In other words, one should not be afraid to voice his or her views during the deliberations of issues at *kgotla*. The proverbs indicate the participation of other members of the society beyond the management members, i.e. the chief and superiors of the society in governance. The chief and

the community of representatives in the form of a council i.e. *kgotla*, deliberate on the people's suggestions at a traditional court that is also termed *kgotla*. Maclean and McMillan (2009:141) calls this level of democracy "representative democracy". Moleleki (1993:43) says when the men are sitted at *kgotla*, the proverbs are used to give suggestions of implementing an appropriate practice or law. Hence the use of such proverbs such as *leshodu ke le tshwerweng* (Sesotho) ~ *legodu le tshwarwakamorwalo* (Setswana). The literal translation of the aforementioned proverb is 'the thief is the one from whose shoulder the bundle is taken'. The English equivalent is "this he said because was a thief and had a bag" meaning 'we say somebody is guilty when there is evidence'. Another proverb that Sekese (2011) mentions is *ya hlabang yabo ha a tsekiswe* (the one who slaughters her/his cow cannot be given judgement). Sekese (2011:171) says such a person is not given judgement because others steal and slaughter animals that do not belong to them.

There is reciprocal governance between the people and their authorities within the above Sotho communities. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) share another proverb with the Bapedi that shows the participation of the chief in making decisions. When describing the chief's participation, Rakoma (1971:152) gives the following Sepedi proverb *lentšu la Kgoši le agelwa morako*. This proverb is a variation between Sepedi, Sesotho and Setswana. The Sesotho and Setswana versions are *lentswe la morena le ahelwa lesaka* and *lentswe la kgosi le agelwamosako* respectively. The three versions of one proverb above have a similar literal translation 'always build a fence round the king's word' with the English equivalent, "the king can do no wrong". The meaning of this proverb is that 'the chief's words are concluding'. After all deliberations by the community over an issue, the chief's decision is final and respected to ensure the stability of governance. There are no dissenting voices after the chief has decided an issue, as he has the highest authority and any challenging of his authority would lead to anarchy. The other Sotho proverbs therefore literally say *Morena ha a fose* (the chief does not err). Other similar proverbs are *morena ha a tshwaele o a bolaya* (the chief is not given handouts, he successfully hunts the game) meaning the chief is always successful. Another proverb is *morena ha a tentshwe moduopo* (the chief does not wear a tripe loin), meaning that a chief does not err.

The similar Sotho vocabulary in the proverbs as in, *kgoši* (Sepedi and Setswana) ~ *morena* and *morako* ~ *lesaka* (Sesotho) have metaphorical connotations with regard to the role of the chief in the decision making of his people. The words *lerako/mosako/lesaka* (a house's enclave or foundation of stones is built before the roof is fixed). The chief is the foundation of the society as he implements their suggestions. Furthermore there are also phonological variations as in *lentšu* (Sepedi) ~ *lentswe* (Sesotho) (a chief has spoken so the consolidated people's suggestions have to be implemented). The Setswana use another word, *lefoko*, from the Sotho collection. As a result, there is no doubt that the Sotho groups had been together and share a similar system of traditional governance, i.e. of making decisions and ruling.

To show the above acceptance of the chief above, the Sotho have the following proverb more formulated like riddle.

*Ngwetsi ya morena, ngwetsi ya batho kaofela*

(a daughter in law of chief's house, a daughter in law of all the people).

*Mabele*

[Sorghum grains]

The surface of the proverb is the practice of the Sotho that a chief's daughter in law belongs to the chief's family and his people. The people love her as she is the prospective mother of the nation. They guide and take care of her as they expect her to do the same in future. The above proverb indicates that all the people under the chief's jurisdiction love the chief. They chose to be with him because he is a provider like sorghum that has provided the Sotho with staple food. Literally, the chief rations to them when they are hungry and need food. Metaphorically he rations arbitration of law and order. Mokitimi (1991:30) says that the chief is compared to a good yield of sorghum that occurs in any homestead without prejudice of a person's stature. He is a chief of the rich and the poor. His decisions therefore are accepted by everyone in the village.

The role of the local Basotho (Southern Sotho) chief, among others, is the allocation of land to the subjects under his jurisdiction, assistance of his subjects with regard to their economic need, resolving difficult disputes and maintaining good relations amongst his subjects (c.f. Boloetse

2015b:20). There is a similar form of governance among the Bapedi, as Pitje (1950:55) mentions that the chief, in theory, owns the land, as he is the one who allocates it to his subjects. By using the word "theoretically", Pitje intends to say that the chiefs held the land in "trust" for the nation. Ownership of land amongst the Sotho is a communal practice rather than an individualistic understanding that the chief "owns" the land.

Ellenberger (1997) says that the Sotho believe that the land is for those who live in it. In retrospect, that is why the Sotho communities could move and live where they preferred without questioning each other about their settlement. The chief among the Bapedi, cares for the community's welfare and is a high authority with power given to him by his people, e.g. he has the right to call an assembly of his people, impose the penalty of banishment or death and organize ritual ceremonies. The Bapedi chief traditionally also resolves disputes among his subjects. Pitje (1950:55) gives further examples of the Pedi chief dealing with offences like sorcery, homicide, rape and treason if they could not be resolved at a local level.

The Batswana system is similar to that of Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi. Breutz (1991:152) says a chief in this group looks at accusations and criminal cases. He gives judgement and punishes the wrongdoers. The Setswana proverb *Kgoši ke ngaka* (a chief is a doctor) elucidates the importance of a chief in managing and overseeing his village according to the style of the Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho). Rakoma (1971:141) mentions that there is nothing that can happen in the village without the knowledge of the chief, indicating his participation as the senior leader in the issues of his people. The above proverb resonates with the following one *morena ke kgetsi ya masepa*, mentioned by Mokitimi (1997:31) meaning 'the chief is a collector of all, the garbage and the good things'. Batswana have a proverb similar to Southern Sotho *Kgosi thothobolo e olela matlakala* meaning 'a chief is like an ashheap on which all the refuse is gathered' or 'the higher the position the greater the responsibility'.

Although separated from the rest of the Sotho by the modern boundary between Lesotho and South Africa, contemporary examples of the core functions of the chief among the Southern Sotho in the Kingdom of Lesotho indicate that the chieftaincy has continued Sotho traditional functions. The *Public Eye*, a local Lesotho newspaper (8 May 2015), mentions that apart from

general governance, the local village chief resolves his people's problems regarding stock rearing, e.g. giving *bewys/Babeisi* (evidence, proof, approval), as the Basotho (Southern Sotho), among others, sell animals to make a living.

The chief gives community members the *bewys* (Afrikaans for proof) document as an evidence that the animals are theirs to prevent stock theft in the community. Basotho (Southern Sotho) adopted the Afrikaans word and gave it the Sotho phonological formation *Babeisi*. The term means that the local chief approves, gives evidence or proof that his subject is the owner of the animals, thus allowing him/her to get the modern government facility. The local chief also helps his subjects to get passports, birth certificates and banking facilities, as these services need the chief's stamp. A local from the Basotho (Southern Sotho) traditional village, Vuka-Mosotho, in the constituency of Malibamatšo at Leribe in Lesotho, told *The Public Eye* newspaper (8 May 2015) that it is difficult to get the above services if the chief does not facilitate the procedure.

There is an interesting analogy of the above significance of the local chief. In the Sotho folktale found among the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho), Prince Masilo is the helper who bestows peace so that the people under his jurisdiction do not suffer unnecessarily; he is always there in their hour of need (Guma, 1980:9). This is in correlation with the Sotho proverb, *mohlanka wa moreneng, morena* (the chief is the servant of the people) when one regards the relating of *morena* (chief) and *mohlanka* (servant). Furthermore, the chief stands in the place of the senior chief.

Phafoli & Zulu (2014: 185) mention that among the Basotho (Southern Sotho) the *morena* (chief) supports his subjects and is expected to serve a community without discriminating against anyone, e.g. when one of the community members has passed on, the chief allocates a site for the burial of the deceased and orders the men of the village to dig the grave. This he does according to the Sotho ritual and in the name of the group. He also sees that there is order and peace when the night vigil is held.

The above discussions are relevant to the politics of chieftaincy amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana as they show that the Sotho chieftaincy is still practised and is

relevant even today. Phafoli & Zulu (2014:185) says the Basotho (Southern Sotho)'s profound identity with chiefs and the *borena* (chieftaincy) became evident with regard to the remarkable disagreement because of the numbering of houses at a lower income housing project Mohalalitoe in Maseru, the capital of Lesotho, in the late 1970s. The community members who were allocated these houses chose to be recognised as members of the villages where the project was established as opposed to having their houses numbered.

When one has a numbered house, one is on his/her own within one's locality, as it is the urban or township style. The local chief will not help people living in numbered houses the same as he administers to people living in the village, e.g. allocation of fields, water, health facilities, and the maintenance of good relationships between families and neighbours by resolving disputes.

Phafoli & Zulu (2014:185) says the Basotho (Southern Sotho) disassociated with numbered housing by saying *ha ke batle ho ba ngwan'a ntlo ya nomoro* meaning (I do not want to be a child of a numbered house). This particular idiomatic phrase had appeared amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) in South Africa during the formation of the Republic of South Africa with the introduction of the apartheid system long before the abovementioned project in Lesotho. In retrospect, meaning, "I have an identity as a member of a Basotho (Southern Sotho) community, I belong to a society with a certain culture and customs – I am not just a number". The Basotho (Southern Sotho) societies who still have active chieftaincy are the Bantustan homelands, e.g. Qwaqwa and Matatiele where little modern improvement was realised.

Boloetse's (2015b:20) article entitled *The Place of Chiefs in Today's Democracy*, mentions that chieftaincy amongst the Sotho cannot be wished away. The title of the article itself shows that the Sotho harmonise traditional chieftaincy with modern governance. One finds little interference of Sotho traditional governance where Sotho still have this type of governance and the context does not prohibit them from practising it, e.g. Lesotho and Botswana. The two areas of the Sotho sovereignty that traditionally belongs to the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Batswana groups respectively became protectorates instead of being part of the Republic of South Africa.

Another function of a Sotho chief is to uphold the Sotho culture and customs. Joel Motšoenene, the principal chief of Leribe District in Lesotho mentioned to *Public Eye* (2015:18) that traditional leaders are at the centre of Basotho (Southern Sotho) culture and customs and play an important role in preserving the customs and culture.

Phafoli & Zulu (2014:185) says upholding the Basotho (Southern Sotho) customs and culture by placing the chieftaincy as the central role is not overseen only by the chiefs, the people also have a duty to preserve the political heritage and culture. One of the things that the Basotho (Southern Sotho) initiates learn is to respect the chieftaincy, beginning with their local chiefs and their elders, as they are an authority that keeps order amongst the group members even at a local level. Chieftainship is therefore regarded as a valuable institution that is even taught at the initiation school. Breutz (1991) and Pitjie (1950) hold a similar view among the Batswana and the Bapedi.

On 24 May 2015, during the national celebration of Africa Day in Pretoria at Mamelodi, the mayor of Tshwane, Kgosi-e-ntsho Ramokgopa, ended his introduction of President Jacob Zuma with *Pula ha e ne!* (let it rain). The assembled members from all over South Africa answered "E!" which is a way from time in memorium that the Bapedi end their speeches in an assembly. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) have a similar saying, *Kgotso!* When a speaker ends his speech and the assembled community say, *Pula! Nala!* Another version is that of the Batswana, where the speaker says *Pula!* and the people answer *Nala!*

This maintenance of peace and wishing hegemony amongst the Sotho people is also shown in their greetings. When a Mosotho greets a Mopedi person with *Kgotso!* the latter answers, *ha e ate!* (Let it be in abundance). A Sepedi greeting is *Ashe!* A variation of *Ahe!* i.e. a variation of the Sotho *dumelang*, *ahe~ashe* (I have already agreed that there is peace, how about you?) The most widespread greeting across the Sotho groups is *dumelang!* When David Makhura, Maite Nkwana Mashabane and President Jacob Zuma each addressed the Africa Day gathering (24 May 2015, see Makhura 2015; Mashabane 2015; Zuma 2015) at Mamelodi, they began with a greeting, *dumelang!* the people answered *E!* (Yes!). In a more formal greeting it is *age!* in Sepedi or Setswana and *ahe !* in Sesotho. One can analyse that the leaders were saying to the people *dumelang hore kgotso e teng*. The people response of *E!* meant that they were saying *E, rea*

*dumela hore kgotso e teng* (yes, we agree that there is peace). This particular greeting also happens amongst the entire Sotho wherever they meet. Neighbours of other nationalities also use it when greeting Sothos to recognise their identity and authority. Furthermore the greeting is used to promote peace between the neighbouring communities.

The greeting is a belief in the form of a sentence that underlies hegemony and the status quo amongst the Sotho. It actually says *dumela hore kgotso e teng!* (Are you in agreement that there is peace?). The Sotho believe that when there is peace (*kgotso*), there will be more rain (*pula*) and abundance (*nala*). As a result, the Batswana have the saying *Kgotso ke nala* (peace is wealth). Therefore, the Sotho variably greet in this way in the assemblies convened at their places, according to their similar vocabulary.

Furthermore, the Sotho apply this belief in status quo and hegemony to their traditional greeting idioms to indicate a yearning for the status quo and hegemony. Even today, the Sotho are not happy when one passes by without a greeting to show that they are at peace with other people; it is frowned upon and regarded as uncouth not to greet other people. The practice was maintained, although the national assemblies, including those in the urban areas, seem to have emerged only after 1994 in South Africa, as shown above, as the African tradition was obscured during the colonial apartheid period.

An ulterior motive for holding *pitso* (community assembly) at Mamelodi may have been the recent xenophobic attacks that were prevailing throughout the country, as the speech of the president (Jacob Zuma) and the chairperson of the Organisation of African Union (OAU), Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, incorporated this issue in their speeches. The Gauteng province was one of the most affected areas.

Rakoma (1983:54) says that in the gathering like this the programme convenors that help the gathered people to pay attention would say *Tšie lala!* (please gathered nation members pay attention), meaning *homolang ka moka* (all of you keep quiet.) The tradition is also similar among the other Sotho groups. For example Basotho (Southern Sotho) say *Tsie lala!* (please gathered nation members pay attention) with the similar meaning *tholang kaofela* (all of you



keep quiet). The people are reminded from time to time to lower their voices, keep order and listen to the message of the leader by the leader or his/her men. David Makhura was the programme convener of the day, with Maite Nkwana Mashabane helping him. Perhaps it is because Mashabane is a national leader from Pretoria among the Bapedi people.

One draws a similarity between chieftainess 'Manthatasi and the minister of foreign affairs Maite Nkoana Mashabane in this thesis. Furthermore there is a president of the African Union Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma. There is a tendency to make a wife of the chief, a chief due to her achievement in leadership or due to the absence of her husband while he is diplomatically deployed, sick or dead. Furthermore other women are born leaders and are considered exceptional like in the prophetess 'Mantsopa's case.

The thesis further draws the similarities between Sotho women leaders of all times. Monyakane (2014: 177) explains 'Mantsopa as one of the brain workers of the Basotho (Southern Sotho) and a spiritual leader discussed leadership issues amongst the Basotho (Southern Sotho) with connections to the entire Basotho (Southern Sotho) chieftaincy. Moshoeshoe I and other Basotho (Southern Sotho) leadership trusted her foresight. She was a Motaung, and her grave is a monument at the original fortress of chief Moletsane, where he was the first Sotho chief to accept the Anglican missionaries amongst the Sotho.

There is further involvement of women in the issues of traditional leadership contemporarily. The SABC 3 news (26 May, 2016) explained that the Bakubung community near Rustenburg – just a little bit outside Pretoria has a queen who is much involved in the material resources for her community in the form of platinum mines and a stake in the Casino around the area. The queen was at modern court that acquired the name *kgoro ya tseko* (council of arbitration) with her supporters to contest the rightful heir with regard to her community of the Bakubung, or with regard to Sotho terminology of the Sotho political structure, the *kgoro* of the Bakubung. The situation of the Bakubung queen within the traditional structures of governance shows that women's place is not always in the kitchen as the social practices show in the previous chapter.

The Sotho have the following proverbs to explain the parity, for example of gender in governance administration.

Proverb: *Ntwa ha e lwanwe ka dikgoka,*

*le ba basesanyane ba ya e lwana.*

( war is not fought because someone is mightier than the other,  
even the thin ones fight it).

Expl: War is fought with tactics, not muscle.

The above proverb has a stature similar to that of a praise poem. It shows that there are also unsung heroes in the society that contribute to the governance of the society. However the majority of the praise poems are made for men as a common tradition although women do participate, majority of times when the situation is tough in governance they may not have praise poems remembering their history.

The people of Mamelodi call their place *Tshwane'a Mamelodi* (Mamelodi, the village or the people of Chief Tshwane). This means before the town ensued, the village covered the entire Pretoria. The resurrection of the power relations with regard to conducting Africa Day in this location of Chief Tshwane indicates an active recollection of *kgotla* with regard to the Kgatla chieftaincy amongst the Bapedi that is also part of a larger South Africa.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:49) maintain that intertextuality is "the combination of my voice and the voice of another". The Sotho proverb *thebe e seelwa hodima e nngwe* echoes this theory. The response would be "you just do not look at Pretoria as a Westernised place like the name Pretoria suggests. Tshwane/Pretoria also entails the Sotho history of the Bakgatla clan amongst the Bapedi group of Chief Tshwane that reminds the Bapedi of their values that were practised in the same place. Smith (1956:52) says Tshwane was the chief of the Maphuthing, one of the Sotho tribes among the Tswana. Chief Sebetwane on his way to Zambia during the Difaqane married Setlotlo, a woman from this tribe. Setlotlo later bore an heir by the name of Sekeletu. It was during this time that Maphuthing were weakened and later joined the Bapedi chieftdom to become one of their kgoro to attain status quo. (c.f. Monnig 1967).

The following popular song by *The Mahotella Queens* centres on their belief in a peaceful nation and using their chieftaincy system to achieve it.

*Pula ya medupe*

[Ah the peaceful rain]

*Ha le dume le hole*

[Let it rain and thunder]

*Leboya la Batho ba rona*

[The North [ern Transvaal] of our people]

*Leboya la kgomo le motho*

[The North [ern Transvaal] of the cow and a person]

*Ke re pula ya medupe*

[I am saying rain peacefully]

*Lesotho le letle ha ka कांग!*

[How beautiful is Lesotho!]

*Lesotho thabeng tsa maluti.*

[Lesotho in the mountain kingdom.]

*Pula ya medupe Botswana bo botle ha kaa कांग!*

[Peaceful rain, how beautiful is Botswana!]

*Bomatshwaraditeu, marena a rona!*

[The leadership, our chieftaincy!]

*Dumelang! Dumelang! Dumelang!*

[*Dumelang* (Greetings)! *Dumelang* (Greetings)! *Dumelang* (Greetings)!]

The song was popular in southern Africa during the apartheid system, perhaps as a protest to recognise the African authority of chieftaincy and their role in governance, especially with regard to South Africa. *Marena a rona* refers to the chiefs of the Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) groups. The Mahotella queens have made the relationship of the Sotho and their

governance live in a song. The three *dumelang* greetings symbolise the three similar collectives of the Sotho clans into Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana that have a similar leadership structure and tradition.

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the similarity of the Sotho brought about by their smallest structure of the communities in the form of clans. The structure of Sotho groups seems to be similar across the groups, i.e. the tradition of the political will of self-sustenance and welfare to reach every individual within a group. The small communities have an option or are at liberty to move away from their original place to another where most of the time they join a different Sotho chiefdom or group. The result has been a variation of similar communities across the Sotho groups of Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi. These communities further show similar ways of governance that indicate the same origin.

There is a pattern across the Sotho groups that when a brother or a relation has the political will to become independent, he/she begins by making a small collective into a clan. However, a clan leader still sees the necessity to cooperate with similar Sotho clans and other small communities in his vicinity to acquire more political power and cooperation amongst the local people. Hence the Sotho form a chiefdom through the similar tradition or philosophy of *ho fera phatla ya tshwene*, (surrounding oneself with one's relations as a major community while accepting the immigrants and the conquered to consolidate the strength of one's chiefdom).

This practice is similar across the Sotho chiefdoms. The chiefdoms in turn use a similar means to form a much bigger and stronger community in the form of a Sotho group, where a central chiefdom cooperates with other chiefdoms through a formal agreement to unite in governance. The leader of the central chiefdom acts as the coordinator and senior chief.

The Sotho groups have a similar way of governance. Their traditional kraals of council are similar in function and political will. They use similar proverbs and idioms that show how ruling and discussions are held at the *kgotla* and similar proverbs presented only in different language variations of similar vocabulary as in *Lentswe la morena le haelwa lesaka* and *lentšu la Kgoši le*

*agelwa morako* (the chief's voice is final). The tradition of their public discussions is similar in the form of *pitso*. The Sotho three groups maintain the Sotho identity of self-determination that conserves the values, norms and customs that are similar among the Sotho and sometimes consult with each other, e.g. the tradition of visiting each other for traditional activities, such as the cultural day amongst the Batlokwa in Botswana that is visited by the Batlokwa from Lesotho and other groups. The Bafokeng of Rustenburg visit the Lesotho and the Basotho (Southern Sotho) visit the Batswana regarding improvements in the Sotho chieftaincy.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to find out whether the Sotho are one people. The thesis concludes that despite the Sotho calling themselves Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana, they emanate from the same origin. The Sotho groups show that they have the same origin by their same culture, social and political systems (see below).

The thesis concludes that the Sotho have the same origin as their cultural dimension is similar. This chapter discusses cultural representations of the Sotho groups, i.e. how they see themselves and how others see them in terms of language and the name "Basotho". The thesis finds that the strongest point of the cultural dimension is language. The thesis discusses its findings that the Sotho languages are dialects not different languages, indicating a similar origin (see below). Two or more people from different regions in a territory with a varied language can communicate with each other and understand two or more dialects.

The thesis found that the Sotho share a similar collective of words, however they do not choose to use them the same way. One group decides to promote a particular word as opposed to its synonyms that might be used daily by other groups, to the extent that counterpart words used by other groups appear archaic, as this group seldom uses them. This context renders language as a marker of a social category, as the Sotho languages have a common source of collective words. All Sotho words become manifested across the varieties of Sotho, e.g. Batswana and Bapedi use *setlhare* for a tree, while Basotho (Southern Sotho) use *sefate*. However, the word *setlhare* in Sesotho refers to a shrub that can be used for medical purposes. Another example is *tsamaya* in Sesotho, as it varies with *sepela* in Sepedi. *Sepela* is left in Sesotho as *lekakanyethedi la monna mosepedi* in Sesotho. There is a variation of pronunciation with the same word amongst the three groups, e.g. *Tshela* is pronounced variably among the Batswana, Basotho (Southern Sotho) and Bapedi. The conclusion from the above examples is that the decisions to change perspectives within a society on an issue do not make its members different but provides different versions of their origin.

New environments make the people discard some everyday words and adopt new ones, as they spread. The new words are formed observing the original Sotho rules of grammar; the addition of new Sotho words improves the language and makes the Sotho group feel comfortable by owning the new environment and concepts. As a result, the variation develops. The new collective of Sotho might meet and stay with new people and their language might influence the Sotho language, e.g. the Basotho (Southern Sotho) meeting with the Xhosas and Zulus. The Sesotho language ended up with additional vocabulary, e.g. *maqaqailana* (ankles) and *qetella*, which have a click sound that the Sotho did not have previously.

Another alternative to the collective Sotho *mtsh* is the form of *nxal*! However, these new words have maintained how Sotho words are formed in terms of how sounds have to follow each other. This process has allowed the new Sotho words to be accepted in the Sotho language as words that can be used in Sotho sentences. This shows that the Sotho, with examples of Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho, are from the same origin, as they share a collective of words and rules of the Sotho language, which is a process called *langue*. One can infer the same *langue* in Sesotho, Setswana and Sepedi, which shows a common origin due to mutual intelligibility.

The thesis found that the Sotho languages orthography is varied. The same sounds are represented in different alphabet compilation. It was not intentional to differentiate between the similar languages of Sotho. The development of Sotho orthography lacked the appropriate expertise of harmonising the languages. The missionaries developed an orthography by approximating it to their respective nationalities' languages within the jurisdiction of Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi respectively. When the Basotho (Southern Sotho) further improved on their orthography, the Basotho (Southern Sotho) in Lesotho preferred to remain with the old orthography, while the South African Basotho (Southern Sotho) adopted the new one. This increased the number of available orthography variations amongst the Sotho.

Although there are many varieties of the Sotho language representing the different collectives of the Sotho lineages and clans that were formed from the Bafokeng and Barolong early lineages, the missionaries only formed an orthography for the three varieties that were sovereign amongst

the three groups of Sotho, hence another variety for written and unwritten Sotho varieties. The group to be used in the running of daily activities by the lineages, who owe allegiance, elevated the varieties that were connected with a political centre of the group governance and cultural practices. Such languages attained the prestigious status of becoming standard Sotho languages in the area. In this case, Sesotho, Sepedi and Setswana are the prestigious languages related to the centre of governance in the three regions of the Sotho territory.

Furthermore, the Sotho have the similar name, Basotho, to show their same origin. One allusion is that the Sotho got their name, Basotho, from the phrase *ba sootho* (those that are brown in complexion). The Bafokeng lineage, who have a light complexion, met the dark-complexioned Bahurutse. Their protégée became the brown complexion clans. However, there is an argument that their name is derived from the way they dress. The Swazis, of Nguni stock, noticed the way the Sotho people dress and upon meeting the Bapedi, who were their neighbours, laughed at the way the Sotho fasten a knot while they dress and told them that the people of the Highveld are *Abeshuntu* (those who fasten the knot). The people of the Highveld agreed that this is their style of dressing.

The Sotho also have the same origin as the three Sotho groups due to their social practices. The most central practice is the initiation school, which largely remains in its original form across the three Sotho groups. There is the same similarity regarding the ethos in marriage, raising children and the handling of death amongst the Sotho. Their similar oral literature and folklore, e.g. folktales, riddles and proverbs, reflects how the Sotho deal with the four stages of life and shows that the Sotho experiences are similar.

The ecocritics theory states that the literature of a people in their society enables them to learn from their environment and that this helps them to understand their practices (c.f. Sone 2014:197). This thesis added another dimension in that a Sotho society uses oral folklore to help solve their problems, e.g. the Sotho folktale *Tselane*, which has a similar narrative across the three Sotho groups, demonstrates Sotho values, norms and customs. However, the Bapedi changed the name of the character Dimo to Makgema (the name of their local cannibal) to make



the folktale easily understood amongst the children, and the tale becomes *Tselane le Makgema*. Thus, the same folktale has a varied title among the Sotho.

Other variations occur when the Sotho accommodate modern ways to address similar problems, e.g. the Basotho (Southern Sotho) use different blades for each surgical procedure performed in the initiation school, while the Bapedi and Batswana incorporate medical doctors. The Basotho (Southern Sotho) call the stiff porridge made from maize *papa* instead of the traditional name *bohobe*, the name the Batswana and Bapedi use for the same dish they originally made from sorghum. The Sotho express the modern knife brought by the Westerners in the riddle, *Monna eo e reng ha a qeta ho ja a re nxa~ Monna yo e reng a sena go ja a re, nxa!* (A man who after he has eaten says *nxa!*)

The formation of groups has not deterred the original Sotho outlook and co-ownership of how to express their experiences, although the transmission of form sometimes makes the Sotho groups appear different. The thesis finds that while the Bapedi and Basotho (Southern Sotho) use the riddle *Baloi ba qabane ka lehaheng* (the witches that have an argument in the cave) (Sesotho) ~ *Baloi ba bina ka lehaheng, ba kgahla dingaka?* (Sepedi), the Batswana might provide a similar experience by having the *dikgobe* dish in the form of the idiomatic expression *ho apeha dikgobe* (to cry)

Sometimes a variation of a term gives an insight of a similar shared experience and history of the three groups, e.g. the Basotho (Southern Sotho) game *Seqha* is still practiced amongst the three groups, although the Basotho (Southern Sotho), Batswana and Bapedi sometimes call it *mokoro*. However, the term *Seqha* is historical in that the Sotho groups might have adopted the game from the San when they arrived together from Ntswanatsatsi. The Bapedi sometimes prefer to call the game *keti* after the Sotho game played with stones. From the variation of names for a similar game, it is known that the Sotho have games played with stones and one of these games was adopted from the San.

The political dimension of the Sotho is revealed by the smallest structure of the communities in the form of clans. The research showed that two lineages of the Bafokeng and Bahurutse

collective intermarried and formed further small communities. In addition, the two original Sotho communities further formed other small communities as they grew. The purpose of this structure seems to be similar across the groups. The small communities have an option or are at liberty to move away from their original place to another where most of the time they join a different Sotho chiefdom or group. The result has been a variation of similar communities across the Sotho groups on the Highveld. These communities further show similar ways of governance and have the same origin and similar blood relations.

Across the Sotho groups, there is a pattern that a brother or a relation has the political will to become independent. He/she leaves to form a small collective or clan. However, a clan leader still sees the necessity to cooperate with similar Sotho clans and other small communities in his vicinity to acquire more political power and cooperation amongst the local people. Hence, the Sotho form a chiefdom through the similar tradition or philosophy of *ho fera phatla ya tshwene* i.e. surrounding oneself with one's relations as a major community while accepting immigrants and the conquered to consolidate the strength of one's chiefdom. This practice is similar across the chiefdoms of the Sotho groups. The chiefdoms, in turn, use a similar means to form a much bigger and stronger community in the form of a Sotho group where a central chiefdom cooperates with other chiefdoms through a formal agreement to unite in governance. The leader of the central chiefdom acts as a coordinator and senior chief.

The Sotho groups have a similar way of governance and their traditional kraals of council are similar in function and political will. For instance, they use a similar council of proverbs and idioms that show how ruling and discussions are held at the *kgotla*, e.g. a similar proverb merely presented in a different language variation of similar vocabulary, as in *Lentswe la morena le haelwa lesaka* and *lentšu la Kgoši le agelwa morako* (the chief's voice is final). The tradition of their public discussions is similar in the form of *pitso*. The Sotho three groups maintain the Sotho identity of self-determination that conserves similar values, norms and customs among the Sotho. They sometimes consult each other, e.g. they visit each other for traditional activities, such as the cultural day amongst the Batlokwa from Botswana and other Batlokwa from other groups, and the Bafokeng of Rustenburg visit the Basotho (Southern Sotho) in Lesotho.

The Basotho (Southern Sotho), Bapedi and Batswana political systems indicate the same origin. The discussion of their political system has shown that the Sotho come together as clans, chiefdoms, groups or as a nation, to allocate resources, e.g. governance and land. The Bapedi, Batswana and Basotho (Southern Sotho) have a similar polity structure with the original understanding of similar special words such as *kgoro*. Their coming together as collectives of communities is the natural effect of a booming population looking for amicable means to share resources as a Sotho society.

Other research can also extend the present study with regard to the Nguni tribes, i.e. the (Zulu, Swati, Ndebele and Xhosa) as well as looking at other languages such as, Venda, Shona, Shangaan or Tsonga, to establish their relationship. The artificial boundaries of people into Nguni, Sotho and other nationalities in southern Africa have been socially constructed but the Southern people are, in fact, one. The imperative is that the boundaries should be broken down universally for people to reclaim their shared heritage of culture and identity. Furthermore, the political and other disciplines, such as sociology, social anthropology and genetics, can take the argument further than the present study, which is curtailed due to the boundaries of its discipline in the humanities.

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